Transgender

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Fall 2003 • #103

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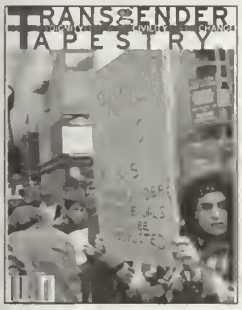

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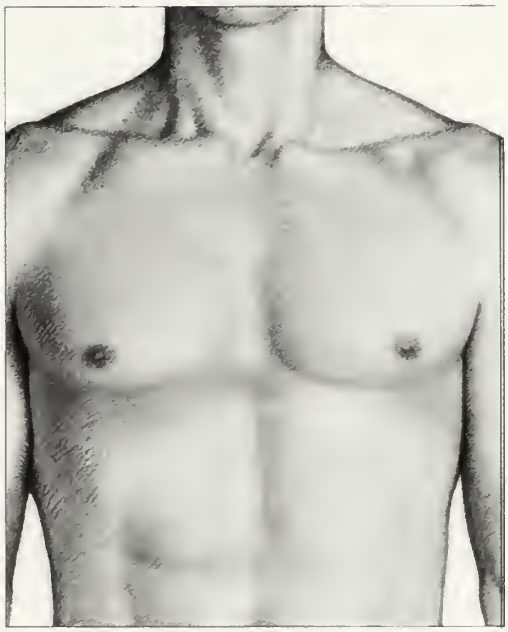

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TRANSGENDER TAPESTRY

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Denise LeClair, Executive Director and Hawk Stone, Chair, IFGE, invites you to our annual conference in the City of Brotherly Love

"The programs that Alison and Kristine have put together for us this year, are some of the most fascinating and informative workshops ever presented" says Hawk.

Denise said: "I like to meet new friends, IFGE members and those that have been to a lot of trans events. The networking alone is one of the best features."

Your host hotel is the Philadelphia Airport Hilton. It is conveniently located just off I-95 and offers free airport shuttle and free parking.

"On behalf of my self and the entire staff at the Hilton, I am happy to welcome back IFGE. We will do everything in our power to insure an enjoyable and safe event" stated Martin Faye, General Manager

For complete program and registration information go to IFGE.ORG. For more information or to be placed on our mailing list contact: S. Kristine James, Cioe Enterprises, P O Box 61, Easton, PA 18044, voice: 610-759-1761, fax: 610-759-0223, e-mail: skristinej@aol.com

TRANSGENDER TAPESTRY

ISSUE 103

THE JOURNAL OF THE INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION FOR GENDER EDUCATION

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Leaving Something Behind...

A Word from the Chair of the IFGE Board of Directors

I came to this year's IFGE convention on a long drive through the night, capped off with a cold steady rain as I reached the Pennsylvania border. The war in Iraq had begun that day, and I was feeling enduringly sad at what the coming days, weeks, and months would bring. This was not the first war to touch my life, nor, I thought, would it be the last. My experience with war stretches all the way back across almost a century to my great uncles fighting in WW I. My desire for peace emerged from the horror and stories my father passed to me as a wee small child of five.

The next morning Alyn Libman, my conference roommate, and I watched, silently transfixed, as the horror unfolded before us on the television. It wasn't until I picked up the *USA Today* lying in front of our room door that it struck home to young Alyn, just 18. I turned to give him the paper as I was on my way out to the IFGE board meeting and he was off to the shower. He looked at me, his eyes trembling and his hand reluctant to take the paper, knowing that if he took it, the war would touch him and mark him forever. I offered it to him, pushing it forward, and said, "Remember this moment. Remember when war touched you and changed you and nothing will ever be the same again." He hesitated, then gingerly took the paper, now his hand trembling and his eyes full with tears. "So senseless," he said, as we stared together at the headlines. "Yes, it is," I said quietly, "but remember this moment and that you shared it with me, that you are not alone in your experience." Alyn looked at me, fear and anguish cascading into puzzlement, the rain outside relentless on the window. I hesitated, feeling the push to be on time for the board meeting. He held the paper now more firmly. "All we have in life to leave behind is what we do, the results of our actions. Think of all those people the world round, demonstrating for peace. You and I may be here, wanting to be there, but we're part of them and we can carry that peace wherever we go." Alyn just nodded slowly.

I turned and walked into my future. Forty minutes and a lifetime away, I was elected Chair of the Board of IFGE, an opportunity of the most incredible kind. From deep sadness to tremendous elation in forty minutes. My thoughts turned immediately to Alyn. I wanted to rush out, tell him the news, relieve him of the heaviness of his day. Instead, I turned to the business at hand.

My first act as Chair was to leave the meeting to facilitate a workshop. On my way to the presentation I thought about the fact that now I would have an opportunity to give something back to my community in a very visible way. That I would be able to harvest the quiet behind-the-scenes hard work I'd been doing for years. That I would have an opportunity to build deeper connections among the rich and varied diversities of our community. That I would have an opportunity to leave a little of me behind as part of the rich legacy of IFGE. I shuddered, thinking what America was leaving behind in Iraq that morning, truly ashamed to be American on this day. Focusing instead on the opportunity to build bridges and bring increased social justice to our community through advocacy and education on an international level, I quieted my soul.

I've always watched nationalistic fervor with the fascination of the permanently outcast. For I'm adopted. I know only a minuscule amount about my birth parents and nothing about my ancestors. As a young person, I often felt like something the aliens left behind one night as a cruel joke. Fairy tales of orphans and foundlings held intense meaning and identification for me as a young child. Connection and bridge building has been a central theme of my life, especially as I have no children to leave behind me. So, by leaving my mark behind me, I seek to solve the dilemma of how others will know I was here. In the work I do. In the connections I make. In the relationships I have. In what I write, photograph. In what I plant in my gardens. And in buying a brick.

Buying a brick? Yes, buying a brick. Coming out as FTM and transitioning to my life as the transsexual man I've always been has been a true joy and delight for me. I am happy to be out—to finally be a visible presence in the world. To finally belong somewhere. Now I understand the fervor. Out and Proud are words which reverberate in my professional bio, and I thought it might be like totally cool to make that more permanent.

In Albany, New York, the mayor had a great idea—to build a bridge from the hubbub of downtown across the interstate highway to the river—the Hudson, to reconnect the citizenry with their river and with nature. Part of the funding for the bridge was raised through selling engraved bricks at an affordable price. I bought a brick, thinking "What an audacious way to be out!" What a great way to leave something behind to let the city and the world know transpeople were here and we walked this bridge, too. I also thought it a great joke on future anthropologists who would study the alien inscription trying to figure out its message. "MOONHAWK RIVER STONE, FTM OUT & PROUD" now resides at E271 on the Riverway Bridge for all time. Cool.

Political action takes many forms. Buying a brick is, perhaps, unusual, but not for a bridge builder. My father served in the engineers in WW II. He spent his military time blowing up bridges, and building bridges, sometimes the same one several times. He did the same thing at home with his family. I'm honored we ended on July 17, 2000 with a bridge built for all time. I am honored that what was bridged between Alyn and I that morning was way more than war as the right of passage into male adulthood. We bridged peace, too. Later that night with Jude Patton, we would take Alyn across the bridge of FTM history into yet a different kind of manhood, as we playfully wandered the rainy streets of Philadelphia.

I'm honored, too, to be entrusted, for awhile, to lead IFGE into its future. In this quarterly column you'll be hearing how things are from this bridge called IFGE, how we continue to advocate, educate, and be a nexus point for the transgender community, and how we continue to leave behind our process and our history for the world to cherish. Peace to you all. Until next time...

Hawk Stone can be reached at:
HawkStoneIFGE@aol.com.

When I was (to be historically accurate) a young man, older and supposedly wiser heads told me my political views would change with age. I told them they wouldn't.

Now that I'm of an age at which it's customary to look forward to retirement, I find my views remain unchanged. That magical moment at which I was supposed to become a Republican has come and gone.

That's not to say I'm a Democrat, or that this little chat we're having, although of a political nature, will be about politics in the partisan sense of the word. I'm here to talk about issues which have concerned me all my life, namely the rights to free speech and assembly, and a right that isn't in the Bill of Rights but should be and doubtless would have been if the Founding Fathers had foreseen the Information Age—the right to privacy.

To me, the essence of America, the very essence of being American, and by the way, part of the second sentence in the Declaration of Independence, is the right to the pursuit of happiness. So long as one's actions don't harm others, I see no reason to limit them, no matter how much I might object to them. For this reason I support the rights to produce and consume pornography, even though pornography has never interested me; the right to deface or destroy the U.S. flag, even though I'm morally outraged by such actions; and the right to say whatever offensive or outrageous thing one wishes—ok, I'll admit I'm guilty of this one.

Why do I support the right of other Americans to do things I consider debased, wicked, or sinful? Because others right here in River City consider the things I do, the very person I am, reprehensible and invalid and would, if they could, wipe me from the face of the planet. They would like nothing better than government sanction or even better, a transgender hunting season. In this post-9/11 era, our federal government, under the pretext of fighting terrorism, has passed Draconian laws that allow Federal snoops access to every aspect of our lives—what we say, what we do, where we go, what we read, what we buy. The government is merrily building the technological framework that will make this intrusion inexpensive, efficient, and deadly.

If we, liberal and conservative alike, don't fight for our freedoms, there will come a day when we will no longer have them. And when these rights of free speech, assembly, and privacy are taken from us, most assuredly we will find we have also lost the right to freely express our gender identities.

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The Man Who Would Write About Queens

If Michael Bailey had purposefully set out to write a book that deliberately demeaned its subjects; if he had set a goal of eroding any respect he might have had as a scientist; if he had intended to subject himself to scorn and derision, he could hardly have done better than producing the inappropriately subtitled *The Man Who Would Be Queen: The Science of Gender Bending and Transsexualism.*

The primary title is intentionally insulting to gay men and transgendered and transsexual people. The content continues this theme of derision. Bailey makes sweeping pronouncements and grand generalizations that go far beyond any existing data. He doesn't even bother to reproduce the few data that exist, preferring instead to refer to his findings and the findings of others in a vague fashion before moving on to absolutist statements. He barely conceals subthemes of his erotic interest in transsexual women and his glee at promoting stereotypes that have proven to be harmful and insulting.

The Man Who Would Be Queen is a sadistic book, one that deliberately belittles and ridicules. Its mean spirit far outweighs any redeeming qualities it might possess. It is a shameful book by a shameless author who should not be surprised at the scorn and disdain to which he has subjected himself.

Tapestry readers can view TMWWBQ free of charge online at **www.nap.edu/catalog/10530.html.**
For a review, see page 27.

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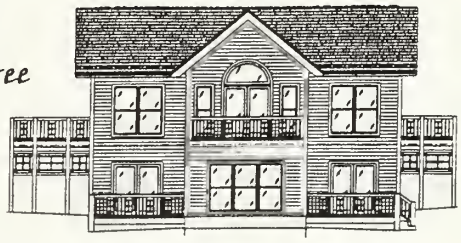

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Kudos on a powerful presentation of valuable resources (*Tapestry* #101). This material will be a tremendous aid to many. The only shortfall is the shelf life of printed material. Please consider creating a web presence to permanently enshrine this material. Over time it would draw an increasing number of people to your web site. Congratulations again.

Rachel Miller
via e-mail

I just received *Transgender Tapestry* #101. Not only is it the best TG/TAP I've ever seen, but it is the best transgender community publication—of any kind—that I have ever seen!!!

You, your staff, and your contributors should all be very proud. Congratulations.

Divinity
Greensboro, NC

My life so far has amounted to nothing but misery, depression, and two failed suicide attempts.

I've known I was different since I was four years old. I would try on my sister's bras, even though they were too large. Sometimes I would sneak into her room and stare at her breasts, wishing I could grow some when I got older. I would steal gowns from my sisters or mother and secretly sleep in them, until I almost got caught.

When I was nine years old, I was molested over the course of a year by an older family "friend." I didn't tell because I was terrified of what might happen to me. At 12 years of age, I molested four of my relatives, doing to them what my family's friend made me do to him.

I grew up in ghettos. As I grew up, I was a loner and got into a lot of trouble. I drank and smoked, and my secret dressing routine escalated. At 15, I had sex with a 40-year-old man while pretending I was a woman. I had frequent sexual encounters until I was 23.

I was depressed because I wanted to come out and wear dresses all the time—but the way my family treated my lesbian sister when she came out installed a fear into me of being alone and disowned. I would have had no support, so I kept it bottled up.

When I was 24, I got married to a 22-year-old native woman—I'm Native American also. I told her about my life, both what had happened to me and what I had done to others. She took it well, telling me she had been a prostitute in Nevada.

After we married, she found my female clothes, makeup, hair removal cremes, and beauty serum, which contained estrogen hormones. We got into a big argument. I lied to her, saying an ex-girlfriend had left it, but she didn't believe me. My nephew overheard us arguing and called the police. I was arrested for domestic violence and got a sentence of ten months. Eight months into the sentence, charges from my past were brought up, and I was given 95 more months. I broke down and cried when the detective told me.

I knew enough to keep my feminine feelings secret from the other prisoners. In 1996, I was sent to a medium security facility at Walla Walla. I spoke with a psychologist and told her of my feminine side, that I am a woman in a man's body, but that I was terrified of coming out because I didn't want to be used sexually by people with 20 years to life.

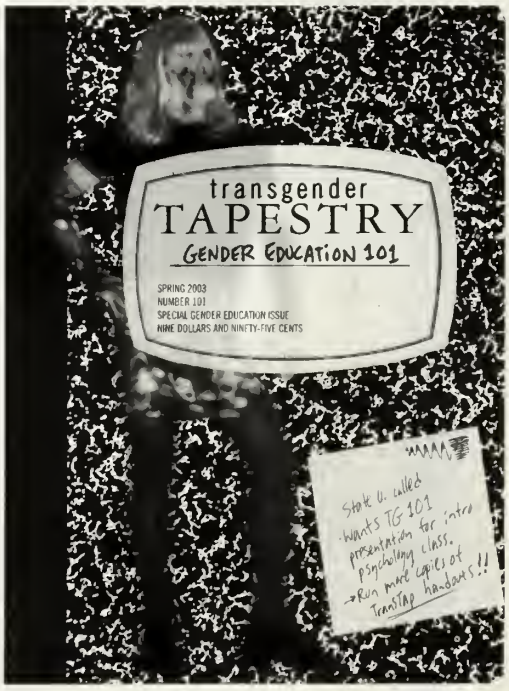
In 1997, I was sent to Airway Heights. For three years I talked with a second psychologist, explaining how tormented my life had become. She said she believed I was transsexual, and asked if I would like to be put on antidepressants. I refused, for to get antidepressants I would have had to visit the psychiatrist and relate everything to him.

We had a service where you could order books. After finding Kate Bornstein's *Gender Outlaw* and reading it, I ordered more books from IFGE, and subscribed to *Tapestry*. I was hungry for information.

Through all this I decided to tell my mom and two older sisters of my plans to transition. My sisters took it well. The lesbian sister said she wished I had told her sooner, because she could have helped me. My mom didn't take it well. She blamed herself for my apparent dilemma.

I've not come out to the rest of my family, but will do so when I get out on June 30 of this year. I look at my release as a sort of new birth. No longer will I be a prisoner to other people's expectations.

Michelle Wheatley
Washington



Transgender Tapestry 101

I visited IFGE's conference and saw Trankila. I left the conference and did not return. I then contacted Exec. Director Nancy Cain and expressed my disapproval of IFGE allowing this person to participate.

You say that, "Our community is about nonconformity to gender stereotypes." I wonder just who empowered you to make that statement? You don't speak for me. I don't believe that the "community" of transgendered people is "about" non-conformity to gender stereotypes at all.

The fact is that most transgendered people conform quite nicely to gender stereotypes. They may be sexed opposite to their gender presentation, but that presentation is generally quite conformal. In addition, most transgendered people... members of the "community"... have little interest in non-conformal activism.

Trankila isn't simply non-conformal. Trankila makes a mockery of this community and turns transgendered people and their "community" into a laughingstock. This person brings shame on our people and adds nothing positive to our efforts to "outreach" (as the Tri-Ess folks would call it) to the non-transgendered community.

Why is it so difficult to deal with the fact that well over 95% of the world, by anyone's yardstick, consists of males and females living according to some set of sex/gender norms. They have a system that has proven to be relatively successful. The human species propagates, a fairly stable ratio of males to females is maintained, children flourish, people are trained in how to live together, social order prevails most of the time, and we haven't yet killed ourselves. They seem to like the system. They protect it. They defend it. Even the most oppressed members of it seem reluctant to part with it.

At the fringes of this bifurcated system is a small "community" of people that are not so easy to classify in the bi-gendered system. Most simply want to blend in and live ordinary lives in the Matrix so to speak. But a very small minority of them are "non-conformal" people who seem determined to cause the 95% to change their views of men, women, sex, gender, and their system to the gender-liberating views of this tiniest fraction of the tiniest minority in the world.

Get real, Dallas. It isn't going to happen. Men are going to be men and women will be women long after you and I are both dead, buried, and fully decomposed in the grave.

Be thankful that our western legal system affords sufficent general protection to allow tolerance of our gender behavior. Within this framework, a transgendered "community" actually prospers. We live, work, and play. Some institutions even codify protections specifically for transgendered people... protections, which I remind you, can be revoked at will.

I can guarantee you that if large numbers of the "community" were living their lives publicly as Trankilas, we would have no protections, no tolerance, and many of us would lie dead... slaughtered by those who tolerate us today but will not tolerate a mockery of their system and values by Trankilas. Trankila goes too far—not only with the beard but with the psychedelic outfits and whore presentation. Trankila is not the symbol of nonconformism triumphing over irrational oppression. Trankila is gender insanity.

Transgendered people have progressed by the acts of extraordinary people standing up for and creating the right to express feelings of gender in variance with their birth sex. These extraordinary people were not sensationalists like Trankila. They simply wanted to live normal lives despite their extraordinary circumstances.

The "community"—the real "community"—consists of fairly ordinary people leading fairly ordinary lives doing things that cause few people any surprise or consternation precisely because they are fairly conformal. Most recently, Michael Kanteras is a perfect example. Here is an extraordinary person trying to lead a normal life. His courage to stand up for his fairly ordinary life and what should have been fairly ordinary rights blazed a trail in Florida for all transgendered people to follow. Judge O'Brien recognized the true nature of our community and his ruling says it all. Read it. Michael represents the "community," not Trankila.

Consider yourself. I have known you for many years. You do your work (fairly conformally)... you come home to your conformal suburban home... plink on your guitar... run your business... attend events... go to the store... mow the lawn... all in a manner that is fairly conformal, if you ask me.

I have NEVER EVER seen you in fuck pumps, psychedelic micro-mini, multicolored shock wig, prostitute's long gloves, and a full face beard! You are highly conformal, Dallas... just like the "community" you write about.

I'm sorry... you won't make me feel like a traitor to some notion of proper transgender values created by gender activists. I am ashamed of Trankila. I want nothing to do with this person. This person does NOT represent the transgender "community" in any way shape or form in my opinion.

PS... I haven't written anything about gender in many years and probably won't for a long time. I didn't do any research or analysis on this. I am reacting at gut level to a picture on the cover of *Tapestry*... a person that I have seen in person and who disgusted me then and now. If you recall, I was once a Tri-Ess member. Virginia and Jane Ellen are occasionally right about some things. This is one of them. You can print this letter if you want, but without editing. All or nothing. I really wrote it for you and not the public. Do as you wish, but no editing of content above my signature.

Brianna Corbett
via e-mail

While I by no means consider myself an elected or appointed spokesperson for the transgender community, I have a duty to use the editor's page in a responsible way. I often challenge our biases and misconceptions. Trankila's journey may be different from, but is no less valid, than mine or yours.—Ed.

AND THAT'S THE WAY IT IS

by Monica F. Helms

A dark and dismal Phoenix apartment sits empty, waiting for its one lone occupant to return. Enter one Monica Helms, a broken shell of a transsexual woman, eking out a meager existence in a life of endless solitude and anonymity. Little did she know, as she put her groceries away, that her life would soon change. The concept of change is not unfamiliar to a transsexual. However, the kind of change Monica will experience can only be found in... the Twilight Zone." (Insert theme music here.)

Monica placed the last can of baked beans on the shelf. "My life is so dull and boring," she sighed. "Just once, I wish I could have a little excitement."

The telephone rang. Monica answered. "Hello?"

"Monica! Thank God, you're home! This is Amanda."

"Oh. Hi."

"You gotta help me, Monica! I called fifty people here in the Phoenix area, and you're the only person at home."

"I'm always at home. What's the problem?"

"We're been given a chance to do some lobbying in D.C., and I need a second person to come with me."

"But—but—"

"No 'buts,' Monica. We have the money, so pack your stuff and let's get going."

"I've never lobbied before."

"You'll be fine. I'll be there with you."

"I guess. If you say so."

"I do. Now start packing. I'll be there in thirty minutes."

After a successful trip to Capital Hill, talking with Arizona representatives and senators, Monica returned once again to the loneliness of her apartment. No sooner had she put away her clothes than the phone rang.

"Hello?"

"Monica, this is Greg at the Center. We need your help."

"I'll be right over." Monica felt tired.

For more than a year, Monica worked on various issues in the community until one day, she had had enough. "I have to get out of here!" Looking around, she shouted, "I know! I'll move to Georgia. Nothing's going on there."

One month later, Monica moved into her new apartment in Marietta, Georgia. As she placed the last can of baked beans on the shelf, the phone rang.

"Hello?"

"Monica? This is A.C. You gotta come to Washington for lobby days."

"But I already lobbied once before."

"That was when you lived in Arizona. You're in Georgia, now. Get yer butt to D.C. on the double!"

"Oh, all right," Monica replied, in a dejected tone of voice.

Once again, Monica found herself wandering the halls of Congress, lobbying for her rights, this time with Georgia representatives and senators. As soon as she returned from Washington, her phone rang and she was asked to help in all kinds of local issues. She did workshops and panels and spoke to university classes, senators and representatives, civic leaders, law enforcement officials, and homeless shelters, and became involved in groups both local and national. The internationally known magazine mogul, Dallas Denny, asked her to write a column for IFGE's magazine. Monica found it hard to sleep. She had little money and little time of her own.

Then one day, Monica received a call from Yvonne of the International Foundation for Gender Education. "Come to Philadelphia. We have something for you."

In Philadelphia, a crowd of people gathered in a large room to see Board Chair Julie Ann Johnson hand Monica a beautiful statue called the Trinity.

Julie then said, "When you go home, put this on your mantel, then get yer butt back to work! You think you can rest now? HA!"

"What have I gotten myself into?" Monica mumbled. Sure enough, as soon as Monica arrived back home from Philadelphia, the phone rang off the hook with calls from people asking her to get involved. "When will this end!" she screamed. She slumped over onto the couch. "When will this end?" she whispered. "When will this ever end?"

Stretching out on her couch, Monica fell into a deep sleep. In her dream, she wore ruby red shoes and muttered, "There's no place like home. There's no place like home." Upon awakening, she noticed that her apartment somehow looked familiar, but couldn't get her bearings at first. Then it hit her. She was in her apartment in Phoenix. The calendar read "January 10, 1998."

"It was only a dream. But it was so real!" Then, she thought of all the good times she had had, all the good things she had done, and all the wonderful people she had met. She began to cry. "Damn, it was only a dream."

Once again, Monica Helms found herself alone and forgotten in her dark apartment. Was it a dream, or a wish that came true? The walls closed in like a prison, keeping her mind from returning to that dream. There's an old saying that goes, "Be careful what you wish for, because you just might get it." Of course, wishes and dreams will always have a stark edge of reality to them—when they happen in the Twilight Zone. (Again, insert theme music.)

NGLTF Changes ED in a New York Minute

One could almost feel the blood vessels pounding on the temples of transgendered people across the country when the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force announced the name of its new Executive Director—Matt Foreman, the Director of the notorious Empire State Pride Agenda. Matt would take the NGLTF helm in May.

For three decades, ESPA fought to get the Sexual Orientation Non-Discrimination Act passed by the New York legislators, and for three decades, it fought to keep transgendered people out of the law. With Foreman as Executive Director of ESPA, New York finally passed a nontransinclusive SONDA on December 17, 2002. In an interview with Roslyn Manley in the May issue of *Orange County & Long Beach Blade*, Foreman stated, "The month preceding the SONDA vote was the most painful month of my life."

Transgendered people felt concern that by selecting Foreman as their new Executive Director, NGLTF was weakening its resolve to include transgender issues in their mission. But after various interviews and statements made by Foreman and others at NGLTF, these concerns evaporated. Foreman not only pointed out that NGLTF is a far different organization then ESPA, but he vowed to continue the Transgender Civil Rights Project and to let Lisa Mottet, the Project's lawyer, continue to devote all of her time to transgender issues.

After so many years of being excluded from SONDA, most of the New York transgender community didn't like hearing that Matt Foreman would head NGLTF. The rest of the country is taking a "wait and see" attitude to his appointment. Can NGLTF take the man out of ESPA, while taking the ESPA out of the man?

Jay's "Joke" Jacks Jaws

Late-night talk shows exist to give people a chance to laugh just before they go to sleep, or to have some background activity while they have a little "foreground" activity. The monologues of Leno and Letterman have covered many of the important issues of our day. But the laughter stopped for the transgender community on March 31, 2003, when Jay Leno said, "The California General Assembly has awarded a man who had a sex change as its Woman of the Year.

Christine Becker L.I.C.S.W.

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When he accepted the award, he said there was a part of him that didn't want to accept it—but that's gone now. That's gone now." Jay's "joke" referred to Theresa Sparks, the transsexual woman member of the San Francisco Human Rights Commission, who was indeed named "Woman of the Year" by the California General Assembly. Over the next 72 hours, angry transsexuals and other transgendered people made calls to "The Tonight Show with Jay Leno," NBC headquarters, and the headquarters of NBC's parent company, General Electric. E-mails were also sent to these locations—with little if any response. NTAC even put out a press release admonishing NBC for what had been said, again with little or no response.

One woman I spoke to at "The Tonight Show" had a hard time understanding why we had a problem with the joke. Even after 30 minutes on the phone with her, I didn't feel she understood. I finally explained that for most transsexuals, using improper pronouns was like using the "N" word to African-Americans. The woman seemed to understand that analogy.

Since the beginning of the year, the transgender community has been the target of abuse in the media, especially on shows like Fox's "O'Reilly Factor" and MSNBC's "Michael Savage Show." We expect these attacks from right-wing conservatives. However, it felt painful being blindsided by a bad joke in a Jay Leno monologue.

It took African-Americans decades to make white America understand how hurtful the "N" word is to them, and they had more people to deliver the message. The transgender community may have to wait until the 22nd Century before non-trans people finally get the message about improper pronouns. Maybe, by then, society will do away with the binary-gender construct. In the meantime, let's not forget to always respond to people like Jay Leno when they make a mistake with pronouns.

Mike Bailey, Won't You Please Go Home!

I have to tell you, I've not seen so much Internet list traffic dedicated to one subject as I have to the new book titled *The Man Who Would Be Queen,* by J. Michael Bailey. I have to admit I've only read a small part of it, so I won't comment on the contents. However, I will comment on the flap this book has caused.

The basis of the problem transsexuals have with Bailey's book stems from the fact that he places all male-to-female transsexuals into just two categories. One category he labels "Homosexual Transsexuals," who, he says, are those transsexuals who transition at a young age, and "Autogynephilic Transsexuals," who transition at an older age.

Award winners at IFGE Conference, 2003, L/R, Dr. Barbara Warren (Trinity), Dottie Laing (Virginia Prince Award) and our very own Monica Helms with her Trinity Award.

To me, trying to place all MTF transsexuals into just two boxes is like trying to cram twenty monkeys into a container that only holds two. No matter how hard you try, you just cannot get them all to stay in. If any of us don't fit his narrow definitions, then does that invalidate our existence? This and many other questions have come up on the lists.

I found it interesting to see how many people on the various lists commented on the contents of this book without having read it. Those who did read it came back with intelligent responses, some even supporting Bailey. Dr. Ann Lawrence wrote a positive review of the book, but keep in mind, she also feels that autogynephilia is endemic to MTF transsexualism.

One of the strongest criticisms of Bailey's book came from Lynn Conway, a former electronic engineer for IBM. She dedicated several pages on her website to TMWWBQ, pointing out the problems this book will cause and the inaccuracies she felt it contained. She felt that since TMWWBQ was printed by Joseph Henry Press—an academic publisher—it would lend intellectual validity to the false information Bailey presents. Some activists who have read the book pointed out that the inaccuracies could actually hurt the transgender movement. Others see it as just another book that only a few right-wingers will take seriously, assuming they even read it.

I may one day finish reading Bailey's book—or I may not. One must judge it on one's own. But please, read it before commenting on its contents. In activism, one learns quickly to have all the facts before picking up the sword. I know, because I've fallen on my sword more times then I can count. It hurts each time I do it.

Made In Japan

In late April, 2003, 35-year-old Aya Kamikawa became the first transsexual elected official in Japan's history when she won a seat in the Setagaya Ward Assembly. With no party support, Kamikawa came in sixth out of the 72 candidates battling for 52 seats in the assembly. Kamikawa, a writer, says she would like to work on discrimination issues when she begins her term. Hearing that a transsexual has been elected to any political office in the world makes me smile.

There have been transsexuals elected to various public offices here in the U.S., but currently, we know of no elected officials. This doesn't mean there are no elected transgendered officials. There are probably hundreds of crossdressers serving in public office today—but none would ever reveal it publicly. There have been speculations about some elected officials, especially former Mayor of New York City Rudy Giuliani, who appeared in public dressed en femme a few times. And even though J. Edgar Hoover wasn't an elected official, his closet contained an abundant number of plus-size dresses.

In one episode of "The West Wing," the press secretary rattled off a number of statistics, one being, "one in forty men wears women's clothes." Of course, none of us can say whether that statistic is true, but it makes for an interesting topic of conversation. If the statistic is true, then odds are at least ten male members of Congress are crossdressers. With our luck, they'll all turn out to be ultra-conservative Republicans who scream, "Men in dresses! Men in dresses!" whenever a bill comes up that includes sexual orientation.

We need to get more transsexuals elected to public office. That's easier said than done. There have been candidates recently, but, sadly, no wins. I can't wait for the day when an out transsexual is elected to Congress. That person could form the first Congressional Transgender Caucus. Maybe, just maybe, those ten crossdressing Congressmen will have the guts to join.

I'd like to visit Japan one of these days to visit Aya Kamikawa. Maybe, I'll go to New Zealand and visit Member of Parliament Georgina Beyer while I'm at it.

Monica Helms is a prolific writer and an even more prolific activist. She resides in Atlanta Georgia in a sub-basement in the infamous Tapestry Towers. She is the first and only transsexual member of the United States Submarines Veterans. Her transgender pride flag was profiled in **Transgender Tapestry #90.**

Monica can be reached via e-mail at: *TGActivist@prodigy.net.*

Gender Spectrum: Reflections of a Transgendered Woman in the Isles

by Li Anne W. Taft

Giving All the Right Answers

When body features, voice, and personal history don't quite match, curious others often want to know more than transgendered men and women are willing to tell.

"This is Hina from the bank loan department. Does a William E. Taft live there?" I nearly dropped the phone—it's been six years since anyone used my old "male" name. Since I enjoyed a friendly relationship with people at my local bank, I was determined to keep news of my gender change from them to defend against possible stink eye and whispers. "No, why do you ask?" I responded. "Well," Hina continued, "we have a William Taft on your customer record with your social security number." Without hesitation, I informed her, "There is no William Taft here—we're separated. I got that man out of my life." "Oh, I'm so sorry—we'll change your records," Hina said apologetically. Hanging up, I felt a bit devilish, but glad I had been open about my past without being "too" revealing.

The longer I live in my corrected female gender—one which I was not born into—the more I find interactions with non-transgendered others unique and interesting. The true challenge is to appreciate that the comfort and knowledge I hold for myself often clash with the views and feelings others have of me. Questions often arise as to how my narrow hips, strong arms, feminine face, and soft voice match up with my personal history and life as a woman. I've slowly learned to respond in witty ways when others want to know more than I and most other transgendered men and women would be willing to tell.

This time it wasn't my broad shoulders or feet "too big for a woman" that drew attention. Rather, it was the empty spaces on my patient questionnaire that caused Lana the mammogram nurse to inquire, "When did you have your last period?" My heart pounded. My doctor, who recommended this yearly exam, had failed to warn me about this part. Struggling with my desire to be truthful without revealing my transsexual condition, I said softly, "I've never menstruated." "I'm sorry, dear," Lana responded, gently touching my arm. Then she drew back, perplexed. "Are you Mahu, then?"

I knew I had to explain further and not let my own silence define me. "No. I think of myself as a woman who was born male," I stated with pride. "The only monthly cycle I have is an emotional one." I chuckled.

Lana blinked at my full breasts. "So, are they real? Implants could burst in the X-ray machine's pancake press." Feeling flushed, I explained that they were indeed real; prescribed hormones over several years had induced natural breast growth.

Upon viewing the X-ray, Lana declared, "I'm amazed. You have the breasts of a teenage girl!" Having both grown more comfortable, we laughed together.

Visiting recently with a new friend, Liko, at her Aloha Tower shop, the mood grew somber as we talked of her recent separation from her husband. Wanting to console and connect with her, I shared that I was divorced. She must have sensed that I was hiding something—I had, after all, avoided the use of gender-specific pronouns. A verbal ballet ensued. "Are you still friends with your husband?" "Yes, I see my ex occasionally." She probed further: "Does he live close?" "Yes, about two miles away," I dodged. Realizing that I could help her deal with her own changes only if I became more open about mine, I said, "Actually, Cathy and I have rebuilt our friendship." Liko's face lit up with new knowledge, "You said Cathy? You mean your husband had a sex change?"

Stunned and on the verge of laughter, I was tempted to allow her misunderstanding to validate my womanhood—but an inner voice warned me not to give misleading or partial information. Nervously, I explained that it was I who was the husband in my marriage and later had changed genders. I was pleasantly surprised when she stated she was okay with that. Her acceptance strengthened my resolve to always accept myself first and not put my fears on others.

I continue to be tactful and discreet when sharing news of my gender change. I've found much common ground with non-transgendered individuals as to the changes we all go through in life. Feeling the need to balance my right to privacy with the desire of others to know more about me isn't such a big issue any more. And I continue to find new and clever ways to address the curiosity of others.

Resource

GenderHappy
< www.genderhappy.com >:
A website that approaches gender transition in a positive manner. Gender Happy is geared toward helping transgendered men and women create successful and happy lives.

Li Anne Taft has been a resident of Hawaii since 1993. She resides in Honolulu, where she lectures at area colleges on transgender transsexual social and legal issues.

Please e-mail your questions and comments to: **Lwaioli@cs.com.**

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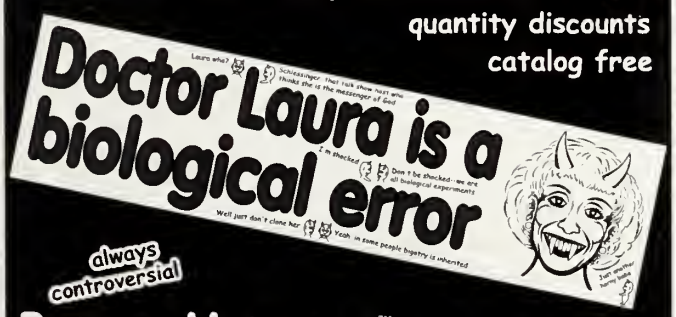

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the rule, not the exception

by Miqqi Alicia Gilbert

It's fascinating to sit in an outdoor café or pub and watch the people stroll by. It's just amazing how they vary in height, weight, width, facial shape, body configuration, skin color, eye shape, hair color and quantity, and on and on. Think how rarely we confuse people, how unusual it is to mistake one person for another. It's so rare that when it happens we're struck by it, and wonder at the similarity, at how one person can look so much like another. Even when people are the same height and weight, even when they have the same measurements, we know they're different. This is because there's an infinite number of variations among people, and when we take them all together those infinite combinations result in individual uniqueness.

All the qualities I listed are visible ones, but the same idea applies to invisible characteristics as well. We all know from watching forensic shows on TV that identities can sometimes be determined by properties invisible from the outside. Dental records, medical history of bone fractures, and so on allow investigators to figure out who is who when no other recourse is available. Sometimes it can be medical information as to the size of someone's heart, or a misshapen lung. In other words, no part of our bodies are identical: it's not just our noses that are unique, it's our stomachs as well.

What I'm suggesting is that each human individual is unique in every respect from every other human individual. Of course, on the large scale (what we call the macro level), we're very similar. We each have heads, hearts, brains, noses, toes, fingers, and so on. Anyone lacking such a part is either very unusual or dead. On the individual level, the micro level, we're each very different, and no one is just exactly like anyone else. That's one reason why there are ranges for "normal" rather than exact specifications. Your weight, if you're a certain height and age, should be between something and something else and even then there are different scales. We're not all the same. If we were, there would be only one dress size and one shoe size (and most likely nothing would fit me right!)

Most of the parts of us that comprise our gender identity aren't open to public scrutiny. Certainly, some are: facial hair and breasts come to mind as important identifiers. Other visible cues, like hand size and Adam's apple, are less obvious and less reliable, and even facial hair and breasts can be misleading. There are many small-breasted women, and some women have substantial facial hair. But most of the gender-determining factors lie out of view. These include our chromosomes, gonads (testes and ovaries), genitals, lactation equipment, urinary systems, certain brain configurations, hormones, and a myriad of other, more technical and less well-known qualities. And what is fascinating is that no two individuals have the identical characteristics that determine their sex and gender. No two people have identical ovaries, penises, hormonal mix, or brain patterns. Everyone falls in a range, in a scale of "normal" to "abnormal."

We say, for example, that someone with 20/20 vision has "perfect" vision—but what we really mean is they have average good vision—"perfect" vision would be more like 20/10 or 20/5. If everyone had 20/40 vision, then that would be normal; signs would be larger, the standard typeface might be 14 point rather than 12, and we would stand closer to people when we talk to them. We know eyesight comes in a wide range, and so we accommodate for it. There are people with exceptional eyesight, and there are people who are blind. In between, a huge number of people ranging from just out of normal to almost blind wear glasses and contacts. When a clothing manufacturer makes blouses, they typically come in everything from XS to XXL. We expect this. We expect people to vary and differ in a multitude of ways.

Except in regard to sex and gender. When it comes to sex and gender, we expect people to belong to one of the two basic categories, depending on their birth-designated sex, and that's an end to it. It's nothing like "strong" and "weak," where we know people fall along a continuum and that any number of women are stronger than many men. No, when it comes to this particular

category, male/female, man/woman, there's little or no latitude. And this is simply wrong. The fact must be that the constellation of properties that determine sex and gender is every bit as variable as those that determine personality, strength, and health. Really, there are millions of people spread all along the masculine/feminine spectrum, millions with conflicting characteristics that, were we able to catalogue them, would show there are far more categories both used and required than just woman and man.

The best analogies for man and woman, by which I mean to cover both sex and gender, are complex things like strength and health. There's no such thing as simply strong or simply weak. Football players are strong and tennis players are strong, but each in different ways. You can have weak arms and strong legs, weak hands but strong shoulders, a strong back but a weak heart. There simply is no such thing as just strong or just weak. The same holds for the idea of being healthy: someone who is remarkably fit might have diabetes or an unhealthy heart. The concept is just too complex to be used simply in an intelligent way. The same, I claim, is true for sex and gender.

Each individual has, first off, a variety of physical components that form a large part of their sexual definition. Each of these components differs from every other in the world, and therefore, is more or less close to or far away from the norm. Because each of these components forms its own range, we're talking about something far more complex than a continuum. Once we add personality—so we're covering what we mean by masculine and feminine—then the complexity increases markedly. What we need at the minimum is a matrix, not a continuum. The idea that there are two and only two sex/gender boxes into which all people must be placed is not simply wrong, it is ridiculous.

I have to stop now, but I'll have more to say about this in the near future.

A note: My column in **Transgender Tapestry** #101 seemed to speak to a lot of readers. I appreciate all the e-mails and comments, and I'm extremely glad it was useful. Do keep letting me know you're out there—it keeps me going. So, please drop a line to **miqqi@gilbert1.net.**

I can't maintain ongoing correspondence with everyone, but I always appreciate and acknowledge a letter.

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We're happy to welcome therapist ***Arlene Istar Lev****—known informally as Ari—to our roster of columnists.—Ed.*

Ask Ari

Dear Ari,

I'm a 35-year-old transgendered person with a problem. I've told everyone in my family about my plans, and all have taken it remarkably well. This includes my spouse, whom I deeply love, and who has known about me since before we were wed. The problem now is deciding how to tell our five-year-old daughter. Any suggestions would be sincerely appreciated.
—"Ready to Tell"

Dear Ready,

With the support of your spouse and your family, I'd say you are one lucky person. The hardest thing for many transgendered people is coping with other people's fears and misconceptions. The wonderful thing about young children is they don't have a lot of fears and misconceptions about gender. Although it always seems to surprise the mental-health community, children of transgendered people usually cope with a parent's gender-identity shifts with ease.

I've worked in my clinical practice with many families of transgendered and transsexual people; the young children in these families rarely struggle with these issues. It presents few problems for developing gender identity and few parent-child conflicts, unless there were previous problems (teenagers and adult children are a whole different issue). I appreciate your consideration of your family's needs. Sometimes when people begin to address long-repressed feelings, they don't realize the impact on their family. However, as a person's transgender identity emerges, it does affect the whole family.

My advice will depend upon your circumstances: do you cross-dress in private? Do you live full-time as the other gender? Are you on hormones? Are you considering sex-reassignment surgery? If you're already cross-dressing in front of your daughter, you may not have to tell her anything. If you've previously hidden this from her, you can begin to let her see this other side of you through clothing choices and other cues. Children are very adaptable; what is presented as "normal" will usually be accepted. As they venture out in the world, they'll begin to see the ways that our families are different. They'll bring home more questions, which can be answered as they emerge.

If you're planning to transition from one gender to another, you might want to explain to her that you've not been happy living in the gender of your birth and that you've decided to live in a way that makes you happier. This makes sense to children, who find happiness an admirable goal. Don't tell you child that you have a problem, or a condition, or a birth defect, or an illness. You definitely don't have any of these. Instead, tell your child who you are, how much her parents love each other, and how much you love her. Remind your child that there's nothing wrong or bad about maleness or femaleness; it's just that the label they gave you didn't fit you correctly.

Children often have questions about transitioning, usually ones that are more about how this affects them. Your daughter may wonder what this means to her sense of being a girl or how her friends will accept it. She may express sadness about "losing" a daddy or mommy role model. These feelings are best expressed and answered honestly.

In a culture where gender options are much greater than they used to be, children are constantly bombarded by divergent viewpoints about women and men. Recently, my 4-year-old son was lying in bed verbally reviewing (for reasons entirely his own) the gender rules he has discovered. Rather pensively, he said, "Men wear pants, but women can wear pants also. Women sometimes wear skirts, but men don't wear skirts. Unless they want to. Right, Momma?"

"Exactly, son."

Our little ones aren't growing up in the same world we did. We grew up in a world where gender was immutable; mothers simply didn't become fathers and vice-versa. Our children are growing up in a world where gender is flexible and can even be changed.

My friend and colleague Pamela Michaels-Fallon told this story of an exchange overheard in her son's preschool class. One child asked another what he wanted to be when he grew up.

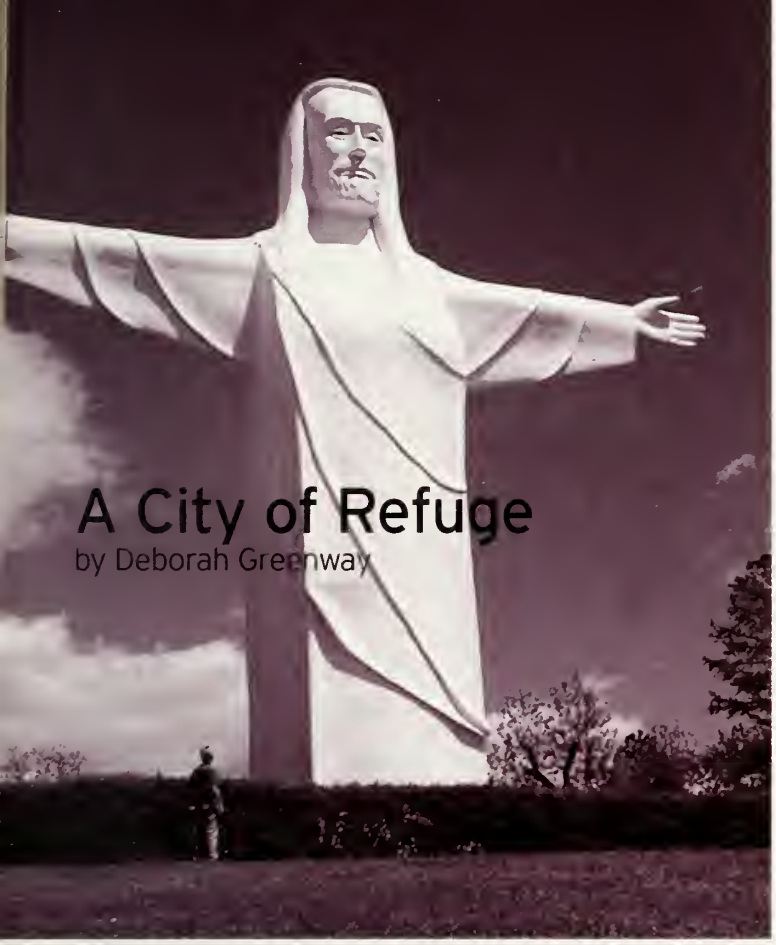
"A mother," he replied.

"Oh, you mean that you don't want to be a man?" a third child said, "like my daddy didn't want to be a man? You want to become a woman like she did?"

The second child responded with ease: "No, that's not what I meant. I want to be a mommy so I can use power tools."

This is their world, where women use power tools and men can become mommies. And I think it's a darn good one.

Arlene Istar Lev*, CSW-R, CASAC, is a therapist specializing in working with LGBT families at Choices Counseling and Consulting (www.choicesconsulting.com) in Albany, New York. She's a mom, educator, activist, and the author of two books,* Transgender Emergence: Therapeutic Guidelines for Working with Gender-Variant People and their Families *(2003, Haworth Press), and* How Queer: LGBT Parenting *(forthcoming, Penguin Press).*



A City of Refuge

by Deborah Greenway

It surprises many of my friends now, but I once lived in the dream of being a Baptist minister. This was in a younger, more idealistic time, before I knew the political landscape, and before I reached my current level of self-knowledge and acceptance. I'm so comfortable now with my femme self, Deborah, that I will go anywhere, any time, and not give it a second thought. Recently, the day came to return to a place preserved in memory, to meet it as it exists in reality today—as my current self—and to proclaim peace.

Traveling east through Kansas, the driving is fast, and daydreaming is easy for someone who spent a good portion of life in the area. It's that time of year when the trees are budding, and you know it's spring. A spotty, light rain is falling. When we reach Missouri, the terrain gets more interesting—there are hills and a plethora of billboard signs, apparently sponsored by local churches—Christians Obey!!!! this or that selected Bible verse, hopeful attempts at 60-mph roadside conversions, or perhaps an effort to keep the unruly masses in line. The billboards continue, and so does the rain.

We pass a factory of some kind, with the huge mowed area in front lined with rows of little crosses, a mock cemetery stating the owner's views on the abortion issue. A mother and her three children, walking along the road, seem both needy and ignored.

A transgender conference in the Arkansas Ozarks? You kidding, boy? This is a place full of those with hate toward those different from the tyrannical majority mold—yet this is where my wife and I are headed. It's a transgender conference called The En Femme Getaway. The sponsor is a retired Arkansas State Trooper. The event has been billed as unlike other transgender conferences around the country—it isn't to take place in the big closet of a hotel. Participants are to have a meal or two together, and then be on their own around the town.

The Getaway is in Eureka Springs, Arkansas. Once known for its healing spring waters, a sort of smaller sister to the more famous Hot Springs, it's now a Victorian resort with winding streets, old neat houses, and the nickname "The Switzerland of America."

In the 1960's, a giant Jesus statue was built nearby. Created by a "name" fundamentalist radio preacher, also a vicious Jew hater and Nazi sympathizer, it's sold as "70 feet tall! 2 million pounds of concrete! Can hold 3 cars on each arm!" Like a Soviet monolith, its creator is buried near its base. Like the best of P.T. Barnum, it's in the mist of a 50-acre religious theme park, complete with a four-hour performance of a play on the last days of Jesus. See! A cast of hundreds! See! 100 Camels! 200 Sheep! Costumes! Souvenirs, T-shirts, and the fabulous Bible Bar candy, with a selection of flavors named straight from the Old Testament. Coming to a vending machine near you! Your purchase decisions can now move Toward a Theology of Convenience!

See! Moneychangers! See! Us, starring in a remake of the end of the movie "Easy Rider" or a Larry McMurtry novel, where the travelers are belittled, then attacked, by vicious redneck types.

The event was centered in the Basin Park Hotel, built in 1905, and once featured in *Ripley's Believe It or Not* as having seven stories and a ground entrance on each floor. We arrived, checked in, and took a look around.

Eureka Springs is like many American towns were before World War II. There are a lot of small

shops, and an interesting and varied architecture. Most of all, it's on a human scale, made to be easily walked, with friendships and social connections soon to be easily made. No cars are needed.

Most businesses in town had been asked by the organizers if they had any problems with transgender. Out of a hundred-plus, only two said they had a problem and I would bet they finally came around. After all, they're used to having a Diversity Day.

We met many people at the conference, including a couple from Salt Lake City (my current residence) we hadn't known before. Some folks were reminiscent of those special people who populate your treasured memories. The whole experience resembled a legendary weekend one remembers from college days, golden in memory, only now real again.

Did we pass? Does it matter, when a person comes up to you and says, "Happy diversity day!" Were we read, or did he think we were a lesbian couple?

Were we accepted by the townspeople? The town and the people themselves became like a big conference. Most there could be your friends, accepting your humanity and ignoring the transgender aspect.

We toured a Victorian house, and the owner allowed that her former husband had "had a little secret" in being, like us, transgendered. As she showed us the tools of life from an earlier era, she told the story of how she found out.

I'm from this area of the country; the mannerisms, accents, dress, and geography took me back in memory to a time when I was the only one on earth in the then-unnamed state of being transgendered. In a way, I went back in time—only in triumph, now. I made friends with every remembered thought, innuendo, comment, and close encounter. What a beautiful way to finally come Home.

by Diana Hignutt

The Compassion

Gaius Marcus Pilate was as nervous as he had been in his entire sixteen years of existence. His heart beat furiously as he made his way through the bustling streets. His young face was flush from the excitement and his breaths alternated between short, shallow, and hyperventilation. He was aware that he was out of place in the seedy section of Jerusalem through which he walked. His rich, Roman robes were in stark contrast to the clothing of the other passersby. He hoped no Centurion would take particular notice of him. He most definitely didn't want to have to explain this to his father. He wouldn't understand. No one would.

He was a tall young man with a crop of dark brown hair, cut short and neat, as was the style. His thin face still possessed a flattering, boyish innocence. He tended to stoop, and rarely held his head high. He had earned his robe of manhood just the week before. He wore it now, though not with the pride felt by most young men his age. He wore it to make his family happy—but that was part of his secret. It was in fact his secret that brought him out on this day. It drove him like some wild creature. A passion raged in him, burning hotter almost every day, a crushing desire that could never be quenched. It was an impossible dream that left his young mind in torment, racked by the-unattainable.

The sun had risen perhaps an hour before. Though early, the streets were already crowded. Merchants set up their wares. Fishermen reeking of their catch bartered vigorously with the fishmonger. Gaius hurried to put some distance between himself and their stench. He paused before a stand of dates. They were perfectly ripe. He thought they might make a suitable gift, so he bought a sack of them from the merchant, who was clearly curious as to why a young, rich Roman nobleman would be purchasing his own fruit. Gaius paid the man considerably more than the dates were worth, and made a comment about his family's slaves being useless.

Gaius was getting quite near to his destination, if his sources were correct. They had better be—he had paid them enough. Down the next street, more an alley than a thoroughfare. Now he was really getting nervous. His stomach twisted and sent a surge of vomit up his throat. He caught it in his mouth and swallowed. To remove the foul flavor of his bile, he ate a date as he walked. The fruit was delightfully sweet and quickly worked to relieve his beleaguered taste buds.

Rows of narrow houses, built of stone and wood, flanked the alleyway. Most were in disrepair. Litter and refuse from animals and people made passage on the uneven road a task for skillful feet. Gaius kept his eyes firmly on the paving stones and his own expensive sandals. Poorly-dressed prostitutes called out to him from doorways. He ignored them and quickened his pace. Now he was really sticking out like the proverbial sore thumb. Ahead, there was a line of people waiting just outside one of the homes. Gaius made his way to the back of the queue.

Six people stood ahead of him. They were a diverse group, from all walks of life and ethnic backgrounds. Gaius studied them. There were Greeks, Jews, and an Ethiopian girl of perhaps five years, who was so sick that she had to be carried by an old man. In fact, most had some visible infirmity. They tended to keep to themselves, lost, perhaps, in their own thoughts and troubles. Gaius felt ill-at-ease, standing there like some itinerant beggar languishing in the dole queue. Nonetheless, he knew they had all come for the same reason. They had come, against all hope, to see if the rumors could possibly be true.

Gaius stood as nonchalantly as he could. He ignored the continuing calls from nearby prostitutes and the looks of inquisitiveness from those who walked by. His doubt worsened the longer he stood there. He knew in his heart that his was a fool's hope. As his fear and doubt fermented in him, the old pain grew as well. It was crushing his soul with daggers of psychic torment. He felt as though he were playing a part, as he tried to behave and present himself as society and custom dictated. Yes, he looked every bit like a young nobleman, but that wasn't what he was. Not really. He felt like… oh, how it hurt to think about it! The shame and guilt stormed in. His desire burned hotter inside him, even as he attempted to repress it. If only this fellow could really help him.

He knew it was impossible, but he had to hope. He had to; there was nothing else.

Gaius didn't allow his internal struggle to play out upon his countenance. He never did. His face was as calm and steady as ever. Presently, he noticed that the line had diminished and he stood before the closed door. His door, the door of the one person who might be able to help him. Inside was this Jewish holy man. The fellow had been in Jerusalem only a few days, and already he was the talk of the city. Gaius had learned of his existence just two days ago, at the dinner table, from his father. As governor of the province of Judea, his father liked to say that he kept his finger on the pulse of things in the provincial capital. He had told Gaius about a holy man who was said to work miracles. His father, of course, dismissed the man as a charlatan, but Gaius had sore need of a miracle. The next day, he went to question anyone who knew of this mysterious cleric's whereabouts. It cost him a fair amount of gold to obtain the information.

The door opened and Gaius' heart skipped a beat. A man with a long blond beard and a broad, friendly face addressed him. "Good day, young sir."

Sir. Ugh. How he hated that title. It was like a knife stuck in his ribs every time someone called him that.

"What can we do for you today. Is this an official visit?"

Gaius stuttered slightly as he spoke, "Ah, Oh n-n-no. It's anything but an official visit. I was hoping to see, um, you know... I've been told he is staying here."

"My, but word travels fast in this city," said the man. "Please enter, my name is Peter, and you are welcome here."

The man Peter moved aside to allow Gaius entrance. Gaius noticed Peter casually examining him, as if to detect some deformity or sign of illness. He did so with such openness and honesty that Gaius didn't mind in the least. But Gaius had no obvious external problems—at least, none noticeable to any but himself.

The outer room was modestly furnished with a small table with an oil lamp upon it, and a chair adjacent. Four people still slept on mats spread over the floor. Two others stood against the far wall, flanking an interior door. Despite Gaius' Roman attire, they nodded and smiled warmly at him. "It will be only a moment, young master," said Peter. "Would you care to sit down?" He indicated the chair with a wave of his hand.

"No, thank you kindly," replied Gaius. "I would prefer to stand, if that's all right."

"Of course," said Peter. "May I give your name?"

"My name is Gaius Marcus Pilate."

A look of surprise and consternation was reflected in Peter's face. "Pilate," he repeated. "You're related to the governor?"

"Yes," said Gaius, almost embarrassed by the admission. "I'm the governor's son." Son. Another spasm of internal pain. The word almost caught in his throat.

Peter took this information calmly enough, though his brow demonstrated concern and perplexity. He gave Gaius another quick scan from head to toe before returning the hopeful, friendly smile to his face.

Gaius saw the old Ethiopian man emerge from the interior room. His eyes glowed and a bright look of rapture marked his face. Gaius jumped back with a start as the little girl followed, skipping, and evidently in good health. Gaius was frankly amazed. He stood there, his jaw hanging open, as Peter excused himself to announce Gaius to his master. He returned in scarcely a moment. "Gaius, if you would," Peter said, gesturing for the youth to enter the other room.

Gaius was shaking as he crossed the floor. He accidentally kicked one of the people sleeping there. He heard a groan and hastily stammered an apology. He was so nervous at this point, that he was having difficulty breathing with any sort of regularity at all. He paused before the open door and looked back at Peter.

"Don't be afraid, son," Peter said encouragingly. "He won't bite you." Gaius swallowed hard and went in.

There were four men in the room, two sitting on a bed, two others standing—but as far as Gaius was concerned, there was only one person there. He was a man in His thirties. His brown hair was quite long and He wore a beard which was neatly trimmed. His robes were modest but presentable. These features were not as distinctive as His eyes, which seemed to glow with a deep light, like the light of all the stars, and the sun, and the moon, all combined and reflected in the blue pools of His irises. There was a peace in

those eyes, and Gaius found himself put at ease.

"Welcome, Gaius Marcus Pilate. This is John," He said, with an inclination of His head. "This is Thomas, and this gentleman here is Judas. They are my friends. My name is Jesus."

Jesus' voice was the essence of power and tranquility combined. Gaius stared at Him in blatant awe, much longer than he should have, then acknowledged each of the men with a bow. "Hello," he said absently, and then, remembering his manners, held out the sack of dates. "These are for you, um, sir. A small gift."

Jesus took the sack from Gaius and peeked inside. "Yum, dates. Thank you." He handed the sack to Thomas. "Now Gaius," He inquired. "Most who come to me are broken in body or in spirit; some are lost and need guidance. But you look whole and healthy, and are too young to be much concerned with spiritual dilemmas. Yet I feel in you much sorrow and pain, hidden from the world and almost without equal among those who have come before me. Gaius, what would you have me do for you?"

Gaius glanced nervously at the other three men and then back to Him, at those pure blue eyes. There was no need to hide from Him. He would understand. Finally. He would understand, even if He could not help. Even simple understanding would be more than Gaius had ever thought he could hope for. Gaius thought of his lifelong struggle, pretending to be what everyone expected him to be, when inside he was someone else entirely. He had always hidden his real feelings, kept them buried down deep, the secret self, the core of his being.

"I'm in constant pain, my Lord," answered Gaius, being honest for the first time in his life. "I suffer from an affliction from which I can never know freedom. I burn with a desire that has eclipsed all aspirations, all hopes, all dreams. It's beyond all possibility, yet it screams louder the more I try to live as I'm expected to. I pray you, Lord, you who have healed the sick, made the lame walk, even raised the dead, can you heal my mind and end my suffering?"

Jesus smiled at Gaius. Peace and love shown brightly in His eyes. He spoke softly, "Child, your agony is plain to me. It wounds my heart to see you so distraught. Yet I cannot do what you are asking of me—for your mind is sound, your spirit wants only that which its natural inclination truly requires. But God loves all of His children and wants us to be happy." He stepped up to Gaius and laid His hands upon his shoulders.

Gaius instantly felt himself wrapped in love. A white light enveloped him. It was as though all of the love in the universe was concentrated on his being and poured then into his very soul. His body thrilled and tingled with the brilliance of heaven itself. There was no time, only love and light.

Jesus took His hands off Gaius' shoulders. The white light gradually receded and the youth's normal perceptions returned. Most of them did. Now everything felt different. Felt right. There was no pain. The conflict, the inner torment were gone. All that was left was a euphoric state of peaceful bliss and the new sensations of her femininity. Jesus was smiling at her. "Be at peace now, Child of God," He said.

Gaia's brain was awhirl with happiness. She looked down at herself. Her long hair spilled down to her shoulders and her ample breasts were glaringly out of place in her robe of manhood.

"You're going to need to get a new robe," offered John.

"And he, I mean she, is going to have a great deal of explaining to do to her father," said Thomas.

"So are we," observed Judas.

Diana Hignutt *is the author of the novel* Moonsword, *a faerie-tale thriller with a TG twist. She is a post-op transsexual woman and a proud member of IFGE. She lives in Southern New Jersey with her wife Elizabeth and their two cats, Nox and Jasper.*

Readers: Do you like transgender fiction? You might check out: "Our Own Stories," (http://www.ourownstories.com), an online literary magazine edited by Terri Main and featuring short stories, poems and essays on transsexual themes. And don't miss Erin Swenson's review of *Moonsword* in this very issue of *Tapestry*.

For Debra Forte, Rita Hester, victims of transphobia.
by Oussama Zahr

My lashes, wistful, close
—Lids soothing eyes
Like aloe over the burn—
Close for moments

Longer than yours do
So you can look at me
Without reciprocity,

—In the dark under my lids
And through my mascara,
I secrete a light unlike
The one you think

You can shine through me—
I do you
This favor knowing

Better than you
Your vulnerability
As you undress me
Sliding my top down over

Hardened silicone bulbs
That you eventually cleave
To procure hastily

My heart, severely
Paring layer after
Failure to excavate
With your light

Some corroborative Truth to
Subdue the erection
That defies you;

Thus you probe, so you rend,
Scared of what you're
Not finding, stick me
Through the way you can't

When you discover
My one inch stump
The relic, the pillar

That you have turned to
That you cannot escape
Even with your 6?

Stab wounds in my chest
Any one of which suffices
To kill me,
Her.

Oussama Zahr *is a junior at Harvard, majoring in Literature. He has taken poetry writing courses with Forrest Gander, Jorie Graham, and Peter Sacks; performed in college musical and opera productions; and is Political Chair of the Harvard LBGT Student Association. He can be reached at zahr@fas.harvard.edu.*

Free To Be My Own Gender

by Angela Dobbs-Sciortino

**Do not treat me as whatever gender you
perceive me to be.
Treat me for who I am
and what I do.
Do not tell me I have to pick
one or the other
So you will feel better about how
you think of me.
Do not tell me there are
only two options.
Do not tell me my gender was
decided by the doctor.
I'm sick of this dichotomous
gender bullshit.
Gender expression can vary wildly.
Do not exclude me because
I don't fit in your perfect mold.
Do not make an example of me
So others will be afraid to
show their true selves.
Just because I am not what
you expect
Does not give you the right
to ridicule, beat, rape, and
murder me.
I have a right to live
and be happy.
A right to be who I am.**

***Angela Dobbs-Sciortino** is a graduate of the University of Wisconsin, with a B.S. in anthropology and women's studies. S/he lives in Madison, Wisconsin. Angel is in a polyamorous relationship with her partner of eight years. S/he can be reached at parody@bigfoot.com.*

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The Man Who Would Be Queen

Review by Christine Beatty

Sex sells. That tenet is a mainstay of modern marketing. For decades everything from toothpaste to new cars have been marketed using the suggestion of sex. And sexologist J. Michael Bailey's new book, *The Man Who Would be Queen: The Science of Gender Bending and Transsexualism,* is a glaring example. Combine lurid sexual description with some fact, with controversial research done a decade or more prior, with long-debunked stereotypes and with the author's smug assurance, and you have Bailey's book. And while it should be easy to dismiss it as sensationalized exploitation, in reality it is dangerous to the entire transgender community, and especially to transsexual people.

The staggering amount of misinformation aside, this book's dangers are twofold. First, it is being pitched as science, as though its wild inaccuracies are facts. Second, that it was actually published under the imprimatur of the National Academies using their own publishing company lends respectability to "findings" and opinions that should have been laughed right out of the editor's office. While it is tempting to speculate that perhaps the Academy Press is so cash-strapped that this sexualized "academic" excursion might have slipped through a potential cash cow, this is not the place for such imputations. It is sufficient to discredit this work by highlighting its many shortcomings.

Before ripping this tome to shreds it is important to note a few positives, because some of Bailey's defenders seize upon these to defend him as a "friend" of our community, and because, to his credit, they are constructive and helpful attitudes. Early on in the book, Bailey envisions an ideal world where children with Gender Identity Disorder are counseled that their feelings are not wrong, and that there are other people like them. Furthermore, in this utopia these kids are started on HRT at puberty if their GID persists and allowed to have SRS after age 16 if they are truly transsexual.

Much later in the book he raises the belief of Dr. Paul McHugh of Johns Hopkins University that SRS is "mutilation," and then he counters that assertion with this: "Given our present state of knowledge, saying that we should focus on removing the transsexual's desire to change sex is equivalent to saying that it is better that they should suffer permanently from gender dysphoria than that they obtain sex reassignment surgery." Good for him! But that still does not undo the damage he does with his sex-obsessed etiology of transsexualism.

Given that Bailey is a sexologist, it is not surprising that the book fairly drips with sex. Rather than dwell on dull and tedious research, he packs the pages with anecdotes and personal observations, most of it focused on carnality. And it is not a vanilla-flavored licentiousness with which he spoonfeeds the reader, it is a graphic galaxy of lewdness, paraphilia and promiscuity. And, according to Bailey, these are not just common behaviors for transsexual people, these are our *main* motives for transition and surgery, no matter what "kind" of transsexual you are. This brings us to the second major flaw in Bailey's book, his classification of transsexual types and their motives.

In Bailey's world there are only two kinds of transsexuals, homosexual and autogynephiliac. However, the responsibility for this over-generalized grouping cannot be laid at Bailey's doorstep. Before the American Psychiatric Association's bible, the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual*, removed Transsexuality as a diagnosis and replaced it with GID, transsexualism was classified into four types: homosexual, heterosexual, asexual and unspecified. The orientation was determined based on the birth-assigned sex of the transsexual person and of her/his partner of choice. Then along came Ray Blanchard of the Clarke Institute of Toronto, who studies men with gender disorders, as well as transsexuals. To "avoid wordiness," according to Bailey, Blanchard lumped the latter three into a group he called "nonhomosexual." He then decided that these three types had remarkable similarities and hung upon them his new pet "diagnosis" that he called "autogynephilia." [It should come as no surprise that Blanchard has since identified autogynephilia in homosexual TSs as well.]

There is no need to recount all of the problems with this theory except as it applies to Bailey's book. In a nutshell, autogynephilia is being "erotically obsessed" with the image of oneself as a woman, a fantasy usually accompanied by masturbation, that begins in childhood. Those are Bailey's exact words, although other proponents of autogynephilia do not state it quite so bluntly. The thing that seems to elude supporters of this theory is that it was developed when studying *men*. Even autogynephilia

cheerleader Dr. Anne Lawrence pointed out in her 1998 *Transgender Tapestry* article: "none of Blanchard's subjects had actually undergone gender transition and sex reassignment surgery—they were simply males who were gender dysphoric, and who said they felt like they were, or wanted to be, women. *Blanchard has never tested his ideas in a group of postoperative male-to-female transsexuals*" [emphasis added]. Yet Bailey recklessly picks up this theoretical cudgel and waves it about as fact. Even worse, he flatly claims it is this motivation instead of GID that motivates all "nonhomosexual" transsexual people.

On page 167, he bluntly states, "Autogynephilia is not primarily a disorder of gender identity," and, instead, several pages later, labels it a "sexual preference." He suggests it is a paraphilia, lumping it in with sadomasochism, exhibitionism, necrophilia, bestiality and pedophilia. Then, while he "hesitates" to link autogynephiliac transsexualism with these others, he believes them to have causes in common: paraphilias occur almost exclusively in *men* and they tend to go together. The implication is that autogynephiliacs may also be pedophiles, etc. As if this isn't enough, he spends six entire pages recounting the tale of Cher/Chuck who, before transition, practiced a bizarre sexual ritual that employed fake breasts, a rubber vagina, a ceiling mirror and a self-constructed "robot man," with a body and a dildo with which Chuck could be anally penetrated. And though Bailey admits he "never met anyone like Cher before," he calls her a "wonderful example" of autogynephilia. (Jeez, let's invite one to dinner with Mom!)

It all boils down to sex. On page 180, Bailey claims that transsexuals want to change their sex because they have "unusual sexual preferences that depend on sex change." Not even "homosexual" transsexualism is spared this erotic motive. The difference is that homosexual transsexuals are, in reality, very feminine gay men. And, like gay men, they crave a wide variety of sexual partners. Bailey claims the motive for this kind of transsexual person is that she can have the heterosexual men she would be denied as a gay man. Much of the book is spent on homosexuality, exhuming and dusting off stereotypes of gay men that are nothing but blatant generalizations.

In fact, the author's next greatest flaw is revealed by all of the stereotyped characterizations that riddle this book like metastasized, inoperable cancer. He catalogues the likely occupations of transsexual people as "waitresses, hairdressers, receptionists, strippers and prostitutes, as well as in many other professions." Apparently Bailey has not spent any time at Lynn Conway's Transsexual Women Successes website.

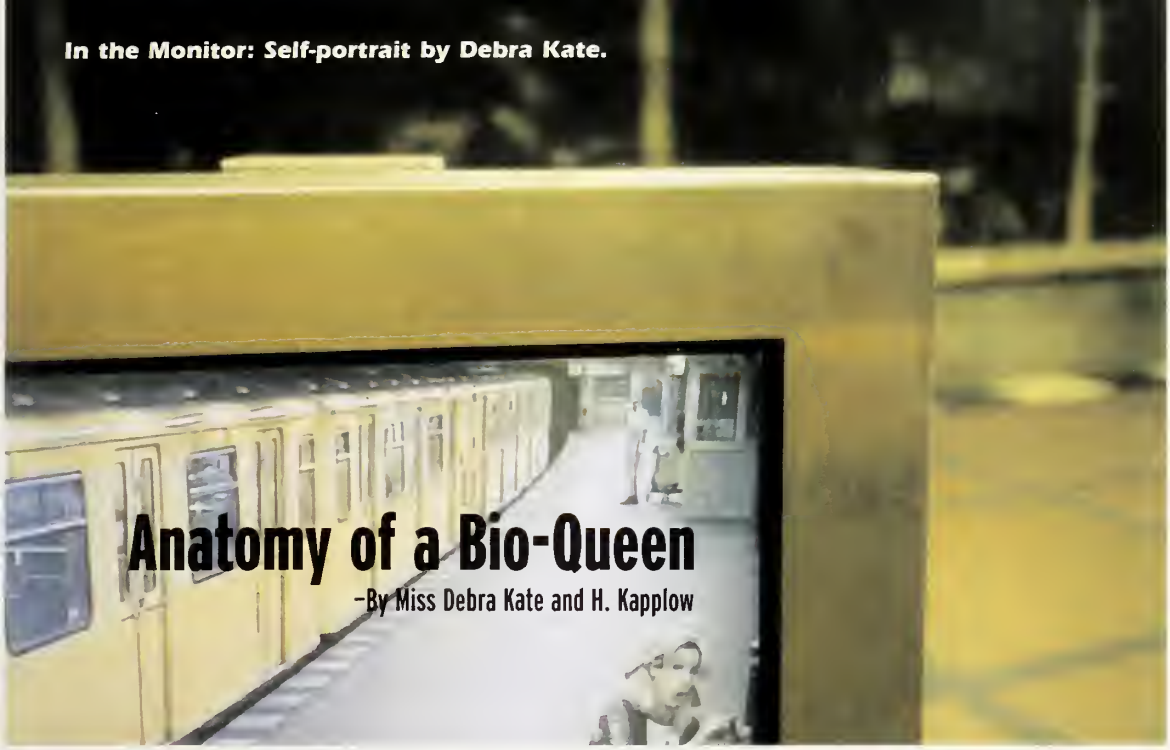
It's difficult to decide which generalizations are more insulting. Aside from their outré sexual motivation, autogynephiles are "not especially feminine" either as children or adults, have to work at femininity, presumably even after transition, don't look as good as homosexual transsexuals, and are more technically inclined than that other group. He states that a subject's interest in cars and sports is sufficient to indicate that she is an autogynephiliac. He even states that "nearly all" the high tech websites are maintained by autogynephiliac transsexuals! Finally, the goal of the autogynephiliac is to be "presentable" while transsexuals of the homosexual stripe aspire to be "objects of desire."

While it's a wonderful compliment to the second group to state they are much more feminine and presentable, they are also depicted as "boy crazy." This description was reported by Bailey's subject Cher and duly recounted as fact. In addition, most homosexual transsexuals don't know of the HBIGDA Standards of Care, "much less attempt to adhere to them." They are also apparently less "respectable" (my quotes). I swear to Goddess, I saw this right on page 184: "Most homosexual transsexuals have also learned how to live on the street. At one time or another many of them have resorted to shoplifting or prostitution or both."

This assassination of character continues unabated, and a few direct quotes illustrate it clearly. Homosexual transsexuals "tend to have a short time horizon with certain pleasure in the present being working great risks for the future." And, "as for shoplifting, homosexual transsexuals are not especially well suited as much as especially motivated. For many their taste in clothing is much more expensive than their income allows... In female impersonator shows, transsexuals often wear design gowns, which are widely believed (by other transsexuals) to have been acquired by the five-fingered discount. Finally, "prostitution is the single most common occupation that homosexual transsexuals in *our study* admitted to (emphasis added). About half have worked as prostitutes at some point." It is this last passage that reveals one of the worst flaws in Bailey's "science." He's extrapolated his limited research to an entire community.

In the same way that Bailey's beliefs are an insult to transsexual women, the incorporation of "science" into the title is an insult to scientists everywhere.

continued on page 56



In the Monitor: Self-portrait by Debra Kate.

Anatomy of a Bio-Queen

-By Miss Debra Kate and H. Kapplow

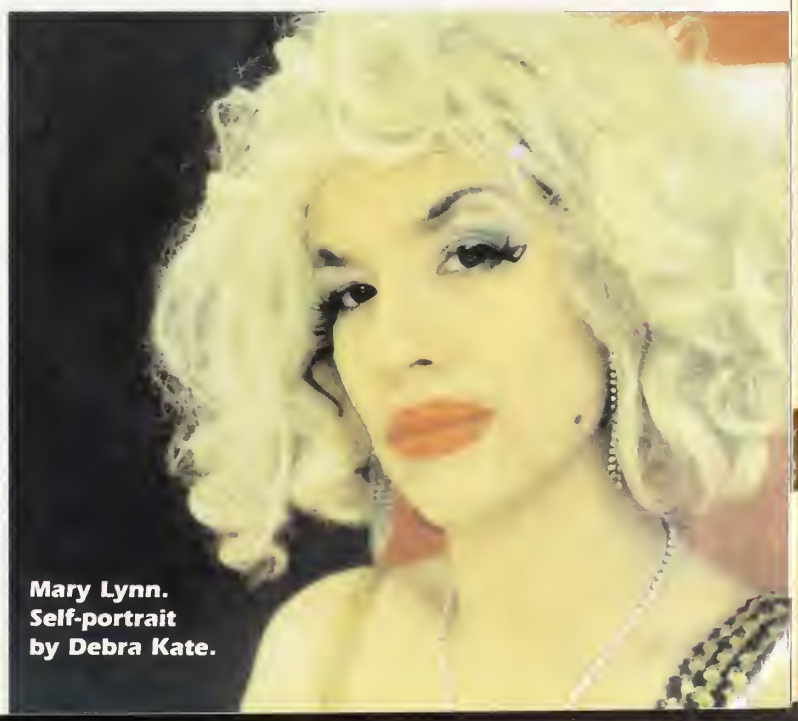
One of Miss Debra Kate's biggest regrets is that her current schedule doesn't leave her enough time to put her makeup on properly. It's not that she doesn't get a chance to apply everything she intends to—it's all there—and it looks fantastic. She just doesn't have the luxury these days of savoring the experience. Applying makeup is a fulfilling act for Debra Kate, and the pleasure she's accustomed to taking in the process is an essential part of the magic by which she transforms herself into a woman. Or into a man. It can be confusing for the casual onlooker, trying to guess what the *final* transformation is. Perhaps there is no final transformation.

On stage, if I don't speak, I'm often mistaken for a man, although I'm wearing women's clothing, a woman's wig, and heavy makeup. This is also the case with many photos of me in "drag." When I'm not dressed in women's clothing, I'm usually never perceived as a man. I wear primarily androgynous clothing, and am often told by men I am totally "weiblich" (womanly). I believe this has nothing to do with my bearing, but is due, rather, to my big tits, belly, and thighs. On stage I enlarge the breasts even more, so they appear fake. I also sometimes enlarge my belly and my ass and add an abnormally large bulge in the crotch.

Debra Kate's thinking and work deals with the expectations that people have of each other—it focuses on what a person should be and then on what they actually are if they aren't what they should be.

There's a lot of crossover in this life. Glamour can be ugliness, and ugliness can be glamorous. I often wear ill-fitting clothes, which changes the audience's perception of my form even further. In addition, I wear backwards wigs and unevenly applied makeup. It's completely ridiculous what people do in real life to modify their bodies to make them smaller and more "perfect," the way they agonize over supposed flaws no one else sees. In my case, and in the case of others I know, the issues are deeper. My breasts started to sprout when I was eight years old, and a tremendous confusion began. But at some point, I just couldn't let myself be overwhelmed by those things anymore. I had to turn my negative situation inside out. I decided to take what I have and make something new out of it.

I can make people laugh at the absurdity of the whole "beauty" situation. Laughter keeps those smiling muscles fit, and a beautiful smile is the true



Mary Lynn. Self-portrait by Debra Kate.

Always Fresh. Self-portrait by Debra Kate

BabyBehinde's. Self-portr

key to looking great. The more you laugh at me, and at yourself, the sexier you become!

Who is this Debra Kate? And more to the point, what is this Debra Kate? An American-born performance/multi-media artist, Debra Kate began traveling between the U.S. D.I.Y. (Do It Yourself) circles and the Berlin drag scene in 1998. This movement was critical to her work.

Her general explorations of identity became more concentrated during this transition, and a clear persona began to evolve. Her drag persona is mischievous in sexual orientation: she is a biological woman dressing as a "man" who is dressing as a "woman." She refuses to see herself or anyone else in the world as definitely male or female, gay, straight, or bisexual—not so much in revolt against the traditional categories as because she just doesn't "get" those boundaries. Debra Kate describes them as "sort of there, but ghostly." She sees them, but then walks right through them.

No matter how many times they explained the whole "girls do this, and boys do that" thing to me as a child, it never sunk in. All the rules about how to behave and what to wear and who should like who... It just went on and on, and I didn't understand any of the reasoning behind it. It always just sounded like babble to me.

If I want to wear it, then I want to wear it. Today I will be wearing a clown nose on the train. Not because it bothers you, but because I enjoy it. I like red. Red is pretty. It hurts no one when I wear a clown nose on the subway, and it makes me happy. This is the basis for much of my work. Acting on a simple desire, without regards for certain constructed social confines, I want to wear a red clown nose. I want to be a princess. Crown. Don't have one? Put something shiny on my head and get on with it. I like to take this into the public realm. Because it's natural to be who you are, not just in your own home, but during the whole day. I ride the trains in fummel *(drag).*

Debra Kate cites her grandmother as a big influence. She remembers shooting a video of her relatives at a big family event once, and her grandmother repeatedly asking her what she was doing. She couldn't understand why everyone was being filmed, when they weren't really doing anything.

The Mouse at Home. Self-portrait

Finally, her grandmother whipped out a mirror and a lipstick and began putting her makeup on for the camera, making a real show out of it, calling to her across the tables, "Look, I'm *doing* something!" the whole while.

It was an eye opening moment for me. In the middle of a Bar Mitzvah celebration, surrounded by people on their best behavior for the occasion, she reveled in an everyday activity and made that activity into a special event. It was intimate and comical. Small scale, but to me, totally glamorous. She was laughing at us as well as at herself, and displaying an incredible honesty about the absurdity of our situation. She wasn't preaching; she was playing, and she brought me onto the playground with her.

The queens taught me femme. I'm naturally butch and the feminine comes to me as more or less a second language. But also, being a drag queen heightens my masculinity. I could never look as butch in male clothing as I do in female clothing. In male clothing, I'm obviously biologically female, but in women's clothing, especially when I wear prosthetics, it can be hard to tell. Underneath the various layers of acquired femininity is the butch core that I was born with. Being female is more like a running gag for me. It's a silly commentary on the silly preconceptions people have of what a woman should be. It's a schtick, as opposed to what I am. Oh, also, when I sing my own songs in drag at straight venues, no one even recognizes that I'm in drag—they just think I'm a strangely dressed, or sometimes glamorous woman—it's a completely different experience than performing within the scene.

Oscar the Grouch Rides Public Transportation. Photo by Boris Otte

Debra Kate hears this little grandma-voice in the back of her head constantly, and it informs all of her work. Her performance is about performing — acting out for an audience—doing something that would be nothing if no one were watching. But she's using the activity—the audience's response and participation, her relationships with other performers—to get at truths about herself and about the construction of identity more generally.

Before finding her way into drag culture, Miss Debra Kate was involved in theater, and then performance art and poetry throughout high school, college and after—but she couldn't stand the prima donnas or the pretension surrounding these scenes. Her artwork has always struggled with self-identification, as well as with the dynamics of social or group norms.

YOU MUST BOW TO MY WILL—Young Debra Kate in Snoopy costume
Photo by Jeanne B. Abrons

Once I laid out many of my belongings on a table at a crafts fair. Because it was a crafts fair, people expected that my belongings were for sale. When they inquired about the price, I told them the things were, in fact, my personal belongings and were not for sale. They were, however, to borrow. I told the fair visitors I had a problem—I had been given the wrong name at birth. It was obvious from my belongings that my name was simply not suitable for the owner of these objects. In order to live a normal life, I needed a new name that was more suitable. By using my things for a short while and wearing my clothes and accessories, I was hoping the visitors would realize what my name actually was. Many people were willing to help me find and recognize my true identity. I was given many names to choose from, ranging from old standards such as Brenda to more whimsical names such as Blue Swimmer. All of these names were much more suited to the owner of my belongings than my original birth name, giving me a feeling of continuity in my life and an overall sense of well-being.

In addition to working as a part of a drag troupe (the recently defunct Café Transler), performing solo at queer venues, and in straight venues without being identified as "in drag," Miss Debra Kate is also a photographer who has been documenting the drag scene for several years now. This work is reminiscent of Nan Goldin's portraiture, but because she's drag performer as well an observer, Debra Kate's photographs provide a true insider's view into the glamorous and not so glamorous everyday life of the transgendered individual.

There is a commonly held notion that those unlike us are abnormal. In the case of drag queens, we are viewed oftentimes as crass, shrill, trashy, exotic, extreme. Sure, many times we are. But I've met my share of straight people who fit those descriptions, and plenty of bland transen. Through my photo documentation, I want to show transen not just as performers, but also in various other stages of our lives. In funnel and out. I also want to show that there are a wide variety of transgendered people. For instance, there are those that crossdress but still identify with their biological sex, and there are those that identify much more strongly with the opposite of their biological sex. There are many more differences, just like with straights. Each transgendered person expresses their personality in their own way. I want to dig under the stereotyped view of transen and show the individualities. Debra

Shoop Shoop: Wigstöckel 2001. Left: Tilly Creutzfeldt-Jakob. Right: Debra Kate.

Kate's move to Berlin was unexpected, but has come to seem exactly right—it was in part her transition into an expatriot that enabled her transition into a full bio-queen.

I first came to Berlin to visit friends. I decided to stay a bit longer and enroll in a German class. I'd always wanted to learn German, and the classes were quite cheap. I needed to find a place to stay while I was studying. I tend to get on fabulously with gay men, so a schoolmate took me down to a gay information center to look at the advertisements for roommates on the pinboard. On a shelf under the pinboard was a flyer for a Barbara Streisand lookalike contest, and that's how I found my way to my first Café Transler show.

Tiffy (Gaby Tupper) & Regina (on right). Photo by Debra Kate

Nadja Auermanchen (Left) & Heinz Huhn (Right): Wong Show, backstage. Photo by Debra Kate

As far as integration into the transgender scene, this was tough for me at first. Primarily because of the language barrier and the fact that I was living out of two bags. I had virtually no makeup, and no collection of odd costume apparel, so that I was limited in my ability to show everyone what I could do. Being a biological female didn't help me either. I had the feeling that certain people viewed me as an American girl looking for a shrill Berlin adventure. Once I got some German under my belt, and brought my makeup over from the States, things began to change albeit slowly.

I had been going to Café Transler shows in outfits made out of whatever I had to fit the theme of the show. For instance, once I fashioned an angel costume out of an old raincoat, toilet paper and tape. Eventually, Café Transler asked me to join them as a member. They were all very supportive. I was feeling pretty self-conscious when I showed up at my first Wigstöckel meeting. I walked into a room full of queens that had

Gaby Tupper (Left) & the Jester (Miss Debra Kate). Photo by Mrs. Gaby

been on the scene, most of them, for years. I was the only biological female in the room, and I had the feeling that they were wondering what the cat had dragged in, but Camelia (a member of Café Transler) stood up and said, "This is Debra. She is wonderful, and I'm glad that she's here." Camelia always stood up for me like that. The other Transler ladies were also supportive—kept me informed about various goings-on that might be of interest to me, helped me study German.

Through Wigstöckel, I met a lot of people, but I still didn't really feel integrated. There weren't so many kings on the scene those first years, so I was one of only a handful of biological females. There was also no one else I knew of who was really doing what I was doing performance-wise in the scene. There were a few other bio queens such as Coco Loves, who is a fabulous moderator, but they weren't dressing up to the extent I was, or playing the variety of roles I was playing. I really tried to do something different for each show although I definitely have a thing for tiaras. That is a re-occurring motif for me.

As far as finally having the feeling that I was being more widely accepted, things started picking up when I began to sing. As the result of a humiliating experience in front of an auditorium of teenagers at the age of 13, I developed a terrible fear of singing for other people. I would get overwhelming panic attacks and have trouble breathing. I started singing at Café Transler as a joke. Just singing really crappy on purpose so I wouldn't feel so self-conscious. People began asking me when I was going to sing again. I guess I wasn't so crappy after all. I really believe a certain amount of my fear of singing comes from being transgendered. I've got huge boobs, and a rather voluptuous female figure, which developed at a fairly young age. When the girls at school still looked like boys, I already looked like a woman. It was torture for me to have people look at my body. To top it off, I was a fricken soprano. Ick! How could those high sounds be coming out of me? I couldn't face the humiliation of singing badly, but even worse was the horror of being "the girl with big boobs who sings badly." In drag, it's different. Female is a role I'm playing, a costume I'm wearing for a performance. I pad my outfits to change my form even more. I really like to give myself a fat gut and substantial backside. I also like to dress as a chicken. I'm into the transspecies thing as well.

For the most part, the kings I meet accept me pretty much off the bat, which is a really great feeling for me, since I was basically a king in my youth. I didn't understand girls at all. I found them baffling. My figure started developing at the age of eight, so as the schoolyard boys began rejecting me as a possible mate, I gradually switched tracks to the sissy boys. The rest is history. Hanging out with kings is like coming home. I love kicking around with the other guys. It's great, although in a different way from when I'm with queens. With the queens, even when

Una Notte Speciale, Photo by Patrick Ahrensdorf

I'm playing the schoolgirl, I'm still often the most butch in the group, which I really get off on. I get to be the little sister while being the big brother at the same time. I thrive on that.

Any transformation of one's gender-presentation, whether full (in terms of either an alteration of one's body or an alteration of one's lifestyle) or partial, constitutes a profound work of self- and social-exploration. It can be an extremely difficult experience. It can also be a work of art.

Bio-queens are a tiny, but steadily growing segment of our population. They have occupied an unsteady place in the transgender community so far, but have been gaining support with the growth of the drag king community. Miss Debra Kate seems to have found her particular place in action—through performance. Her transformation—like the application of her makeup—is happening very much "on the go." She is following her artistic instincts (often at a break-neck pace) in order to find herself. That process, more than any wig, outfit, or prosthesis, which shines through in each photograph, skit, or song she produces, is the most prominent anatomical feature of *this* bio-queen. That, and of course, her incredible charm, which is what makes her a queen rather than simply a lady.

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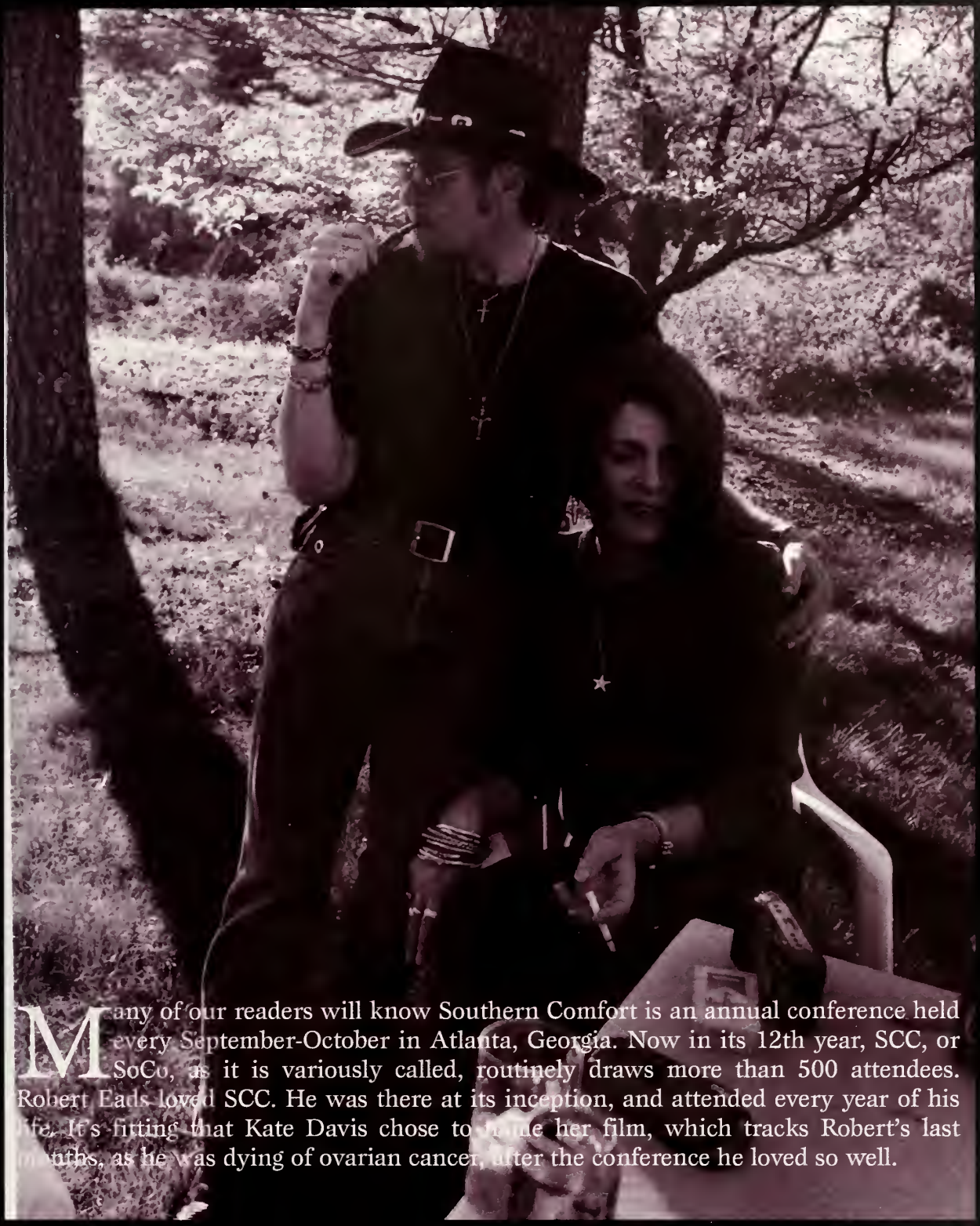
The Making of "Southern Comfort"

written by and photographs by Mariette Pathy Allen



Many of our readers will know Southern Comfort is an annual conference held every September-October in Atlanta, Georgia. Now in its 12th year, SCC, or SoCo, as it is variously called, routinely draws more than 500 attendees. Robert Eads loved SCC. He was there at its inception, and attended every year of his life. It's fitting that Kate Davis chose to frame her film, which tracks Robert's last months, as he was dying of ovarian cancer, after the conference he loved so well.

"Southern Comfort's" genesis was "The Transgender Revolution," a documentary made for A&E television in 1998. Through a mutual friend, I met Kate Davis and David Heilbroner, respectively, a filmmaker and a writer. They are married with two children; at that time, they lived just three blocks away from me.

Kate wore a tuxedo to her high school prom and persuaded her best friend to come as her "date"—she saw it as a political statement, a rebellion against convention. That seemed like a good start, but when I read the proposal Kate and David had sent A&E for a documentary on transsexuality, it was clear they had little knowledge about the subject and their assumptions were outdated.

Sensitive and intelligent, Kate and David were open to a learning blitz: books, tapes, dinner with Kate Bornstein, and much excited, staccato talking. As their consultant, I made three major suggestions: that this film be political rather than just the usual series of personal stories; that the film's content be changed from transsexual to transgender to increase its scope; and finally, that it be shot on the East Coast over the next few months. The Transgender Day of Remembrance, Tiffany Club's First Event, and the True Spirit conference fit perfectly into our schedule.

Maxwell Anderson, who had brought his best friend, Robert Eads, to True Spirit, cried throughout the weekend while we were filming. Knowing Robert was seriously ill with ovarian cancer, Max was afraid Robert wouldn't make it to his beloved Southern Comfort convention, that this would be his last community gathering.

A group of men from True Spirit sat around in a circle next to the hotel swimming pool, talking about their lives while being filmed. Robert spoke twice, even more eloquently than I had remembered from earlier conversations. He spoke about the importance of family and the feelings of loss when families abandon their transgendered children or partners. The next morning, just before leaving, Kate had breakfast with Robert, who, as always, was passionate on his favorite subjects: black coffee, cigarettes, and beautiful women. He charmed Kate. On Sunday night, Kate and I had a long chat. We had both had the same idea: the next film had to be about Robert!

After that decision, remarkable things began to happen. Robert, who had never been a political activist—tended to live his life in private—was open to the idea. He felt his story could help other men avoid the mistakes, pain, and frustration he had gone through. He hadn't had a hysterectomy when he transitioned, had in fact for 12 years avoided going to an ob/gyn because of the discomfort he felt about being in the office. He wanted to tell his story: how he had faced prejudice when he got sick, how at least twenty doctors and three hospitals had refused to treat him when they learned he was transgendered.

Robert felt that by allowing his life to be seen in all its intimacy, he could make a contribution in his last days. In opening up his life, however, his circle of friends, parents, children, and grandchild would also be exposed. Which of the people in Robert's life would be willing to come out along with Robert, and how long would Robert himself be with us and able to communicate? This was, obviously, a risky film to attempt.

Kate bought a digital video camera and learned to use it before we flew to Georgia for Easter. Elizabeth Adams, who lives in New York City but by chance hails from Atlanta, agreed to take sound; as it turned out, she stayed with the film all the way through. We were the only crew.

Over Easter weekend, we all got to know each other. Kate, Elizabeth, and I stayed in Robert's trailer in rural Toccoa, an hour's drive from Atlanta; we slept horizontally on single beds that were put together with a board.

Although they had just begun their relationship, Robert and his partner Lola Cola had to get used to expressing their growing love on tape. A crossdressing friend of Robert—seen in drab in the film—and his wife were still in shock from the experiences they had had trying to find medical help for Robert. Finally, there were Stephanie and Cas, both shy, but charged with anger from the injustices they had seen and experienced. At the next shoot, Maxwell's new girlfriend, Cori, would enter the picture, turning the group into three couples.

I never ceased being astonished by everyone's naturalness and lack of self-consciousness in front of the camera. What actors could possibly have done as good a job in the Hollywood version we fantasized?

There were many tense moments: times when Robert promised that his parents had agreed to be filmed, when we weren't sure he'd actually spoken to them, times when people in the film weren't getting along and we wondered what would happen, times when it looked as if Robert wouldn't last much longer or would be permanently incoherent. But he, and everyone else, kept bouncing back and coming through.

One scary moment occurred at the Southern Comfort conference, when the steering committee didn't want to let the three couples be filmed dancing at the Saturday night "prom." Kate felt strongly that the scene was essential for the film. The committee felt people at the convention might feel their security was being violated. Finally, the problem was solved by cordoning off a section of the dance floor, lighting it, and placing some people there to guard it. We had fifteen minutes to capture the romance and significance of "The Prom That Never Was."

As the film evolved, the medical malfeasance theme became less important than the ongoing essay on the meaning of family and community, sex, love, and intimacy—issues everyone faces, one way or another. The film is edited in a way that takes people awhile to realize that five out of the six key people on camera are transgendered. Judging by the responses of audience members at the Sundance Film Festival and other venues, Lola was a widow like any other.

Kate Davis and Elizabeth Adam's ability to make a film with a light and intriguing touch helps account for "Southern Comfort's" tremendous success. The medical malfeasance is shocking, but the point isn't hammered. Instead, viewers experience the loss of a proud, wise, eloquent, and highly original human being. They come to love him, to understand his life, to appreciate his birth family, and to enjoy being with his chosen family.

The film changed all of us.

"Southern Comfort" Timeline

Easter, 1998	Filming begins
Christmas, 1998	Filming ends
1/17/99	Robert Eads passes away
8/3/00	Trailer shown at Woods Hole Film Festival, Cape Cod
9/16/00	First screening, IFP Independent Film Project, New York
9/26/00	First theater screening, Phipps Plaza c/o Southern Comfort Convention, Atlanta, GA
2/21/01	First theatrical release, Film Forum, NYC
5/6/01	Canadian Television, Sunday Showcase
6/11/01	NPR Radio, interview of Kate Davis, Sheila Nevins, & Ross McElwee
June, 2002	Screenings begin on HBO
3/24/03	Released on DVD & VHS, <www.newvideo.com> & <www.amazon.com>

"Southern Comfort's" Awards

10/00	IFP Market, 2000 HeavyLight Post Production Award
1/18/01–1/28/01	Grand Jury Price for Best Documentary, Sundance Film Festival, Salt Lake City/Park City, Utah
2/7/01–2/18/01	2nd Place Certificate Audience Award, Berlin International Film Festival
4/19/01–5/3/01	Grand Jury Prize, Best Documentary; and Golden Gate Award, Best Biography, San Francisco International Film Festival
4/30/01–5/6/01	Gold Award, Best International Documentary; and Audience Award, at Hot Docs: Canadian International Documentary Festival
6/6/01–6/10/01	Best Use of Coffee in a Scene, Nashville Independent Film Festival
6/7/0–6/14/01	Best Documentary and Best Film of the Festival, Identities Queer Film Festival, Vienna, Austria
6/7/01–6/10/01	1st Runner Up for Best Documentary, Seattle International Film Festival
6/8/01– 6/17/01	Best Documentary Feature, Florida Film Festival, Orlando
6/13/01–6/17/01	Tie for Best Documentary, Provincetown International Film Festival
6/17/01–6/20/01	2nd Place, Best Documentary, Frameline GayFest, San Francisco
7/12/01–7/23/01	Freedom of Expression Award, OutFest Gay & Lesbian Film Festival, Los Angeles
7/28/01–8/4/01	Best Documentary by Audience Award Vote Woods Hole Film Festival
10/14/01–10/21/01	Outreach Award, Expression Award to Mariette Pathy Allen for her photography, Fantasia Fair, Provincetown, MA
10/17/01–10/21/01	Best Documentary by Audience Award Vote, High Falls Festival, Rochester, NY
11/1/01–11/5/01	Best Feature Length Film, Cineffable Lesbiennes Film Festival Paris
2002	Sappho Awards from Girlfriends Magazine; Lesbian Culture, Politics, & Entertainment, Best Documentary

Southern Comfort

I started filming Southern Comfort with no funding, no outside support, but with a gut feeling that Robert's story had to be told, and quickly. The trans people in the film, who lived in rural pockets of Georgia, were brave to join in, and we all hoped the film might change a heart or two, or save a life, and make something positive out of Robert's death.

But none of us had any notion that the film would reach millions, through broadcasts in the U.S. and overseas, and win more than 20 awards, and we certainly didn't plan for the film to stimulate the production of Southern Comfort coffee mugs and Lola Cola cocoa at Sundance.

What thrills me about this unexpected outcome is that it was right in line with Robert's main goal in doing the film. He wanted to help us see trans people as human beings first. In the movie, Robert and his friends reach people through their wisdom, humor, and love—not through any freakishness. And in this time of war, when Americans are pitted against a foreign enemy, I think we might again be reminded that those considered as "the other" be welcomed into the fold of humanity, where we are all more similar at heart than we are different. Then, maybe rather than fueling ourselves with the force of combat, we can actually grow by embracing the infinite variations on a theme.

—Kate Davis

Lola Cola's Sundance Diary

Lola Cola is a transgendered MTF who met and fell in love with Robert Eads, an FTM transsexual, as he was dying from ovarian cancer. Their relationship is documented in the film "Southern Comfort," winner of the Documentary Grand Jury Prize at the 2001 Sundance Film Festival. Ms. Cola hosts the Web site "Lola Cola's Peachy Pages," described as a "Future TG Paradise."

Move over Dorothy, there's a new girl in Oz.

I arrive in Park City on the second day of Sundance, positively astonished at being here at all, much less at the center of so much attention. I'm here because of my participation in a film called "Southern Comfort," which documents the final year in the life of my lover, Robert Eads, a truly beautiful human being who happened to be a female-to-male transsexual. Robert had contracted ovarian cancer and was refused treatment by over 20 doctors. When he finally found help, it was too late. He agreed to the film in the hope that it would help others avoid a similar fate. We thought it might be shown at medical schools and maybe the gay film circuit, but never imagined it would go anywhere as important as Sundance.

To truly appreciate the surreal nature of my experience here, you have to imagine being in my shoes. Aside from being transgendered, you're a fairly typical citizen with no showbiz aspirations or remarkable talents. Suddenly, you're whisked out of your comfy little world into a parallel universe where nearly all the inhabitants are "movie people" of some sort or media. A strange language is spoken. I think it's called wheelie-dealie. It sounds like English, but it might as well be Greek. Luckily, they're bilingual, so I'm not entirely lost.

After unpacking in the hotel room, we hook up with Kate (Davis, the filmmaker) and meet our publicists, who hurry us over to a ski slope where we do an interview with CNN. I'm overjoyed at not dissolving into an incoherent blob in front of the camera, and am fairly relaxed. My toes, however, have iced over, because I wore wimpy Southern socks and urban boots. This is some serious winter weather.

After the interview, we convene to our publicists' suite, where I'm astounded to find a full-size movie poster bearing my image and all sorts of other promotional items. But the Southern Comfort sippy cup with cocoa was just the limit. We joke that it should be known as the Lola Cola Cocoa Cup.

I've decided that everyone should have publicists. Ours are Tom, David, Penny, and Winston, all with perfectly lovely dispositions and capable of Zenlike serenity while juggling ten million details. They know our schedule better than we do and always manage to get us where we need to be with minimal drama. Rather like soccer moms, except they never bitch.

The nine days spent at Sundance were a dizzying swirl of screenings, brunches, interviews, dinners, and parties. I managed to see only three films. One of my favorite events was the PlanetOut/Outfest Queer Brunch, a major party for "our crowd"—I'd guess about 300. And what a crowd it was, the most delicious eye-candy of every description and gender. I'm so proud to be a member of the family.

Meanwhile, our film is getting a very positive response. After each screening there's a question & answer session, and the comments and questions are uniformly supportive and appreciative. I'm amazed at the depth of emotional response people exhibit.

Another memorable evening was a sumptuous dinner hosted by Sheila Nevins and HBO at an incredibly elegant Chinese restaurant. The food was divine and the company and conversations were positively brilliant, even the political discussions in the ladies' room.

One of the most bizarre aspects of this experience is that I become a "sighting." People are recognizing me on the street and congratulating me in the grocery store. It was a

bit startling at first, but after a while became quite nice. I even signed an autograph!

The Playboy Foundation threw a wonderful party at an art gallery, and it was just oh-so-chic dontchaknow, casually elegant, hobnobbing with the upper crust as crisp waiters in starched white jackets circulated with exquisite hors d'oeuvres on linen-covered trays. **Ooh-la-la.**

We went to the Thursday night screening of "Hedwig and the Angry Inch" and were positively dazzled, it was so very brilliant. Afterwards, we went to the Hedwig party, held in a subterranean nightclub where the drinks were plentiful and the music fabulous. We were treated to a set by Hedwig (John Cameron Mitchell) and the band, who rocked the house. I was totally stunned when they dedicated the last song to Lola Cola and then invited us to the private party they were throwing at the house where they were staying. Everyone was perfectly lovely, sweet and hospitable, and I was just thrilled to be hanging out with them.

The grand finale was, of course, the awards ceremony. It was totally the real deal, all the press and paparazzi, the room abuzz with excitement and anticipation. We were so happy that "Scout's Honor" and "Hedwig" won awards, keeping it in the family. And then when they announced "Southern Comfort" as best film (documentary), it was just beyond words. And didn't we all just march right up there like Meryl Streep and get the goods!

The Sundance Film Festival of 2001 will be living large in my memory for quite some time.

Ooh-la-la.

Mariette Pathy Allen is a photographer, writer, and speaker. She has been involved with the transgender community since 1978. Her photography has been published and exhibited nationally and internationally, and is in numerous museum collections. She is the author of *Transformations: Crossdressers and Those Who Love Them*, was the photographer for Riki Wilchins' *Read My Lips*, and is currently finishing *The Gender Frontier*, to be published by Kehrer Verlag in the U.S. in December, 2003.

Mariette is staff photographer for *Transgender Tapestry* and has been responsible for most of the photography since 1986. She has worked as consultant and still photographer on five documentaries, the most recent of which, "Southern Comfort," won the Grand Jury Prize at the 2001 Sundance Film Festival. "Southern Comfort" is now available on DVD.

Robert

The images here portray Robert in the last year of his life. The series begins on Easter and ends at Southern Comfort, shortly before Robert's death. He was determined to live long enough to come back one more time to do a seminar on intimacy with his lover Lola, and to say goodbye to all those he loved. In October, he stood at the podium in front of more than 500 attendees; he died, holding Lola's hand, in January.

Dinner was over, and Robert and Lola sat in front of me watching the annual SoCo talent show. As I was taking pictures, I noticed Robert looking paler, having difficulty concentrating. I wasn't surprised; earlier, he had given a luncheon speech begging his SoCo brothers and sisters to continue to love and support one another. He was in the later stages of ovarian cancer, and would be with them next year in spirit only.

As I watched, tears blurring my focus, I saw Robert slide forward, dropping his head on the table. Lola moved him into his wheelchair and quietly left the banquet. I followed upstairs to find Robert on the bed, conscious but weak, and Lola trying to put him under the covers. I put my arms around Robert and lay down next to him for a moment, then Lola and I began to undress him. Suddenly, Robert said: "Do I have to be at death's door to get two beautiful women to go to bed with me?"

Lola and I laughed and cried together. I was full of love and admiration for Lola: she had grown into such a different person through her time with Robert. The Lola I had observed at past events was a male-to-female crossdresser, Lola Cola, a ditzy glamour girl with great outfits. As her relationship with Robert evolved, so Lola's confidence grew and she was able to express herself as Lola, no matter how she looked. Her self-protective ditziness transformed into vulnerability and resilience.

Although Robert had chest reduction surgery, his surgeon told him a hysterectomy was unnecessary. Like many transmen, he hadn't seen a doctor in years. When he discovered he had ovarian cancer, 20 doctors and three hospitals refused to treat him; one ob/gyn guessed that having a transsexual in his waiting room was making his other patients uncomfortable. After losing a month of critical time, Robert found a doctor willing to accept him, but it was too late.

In Lola's words, "I feel like this beautiful person I love so much was casually sentenced to death for being different. This is so outrageous, I feel we must press for change."

A few weeks after Robert died, Lola's doorbell rang. She found a package sent by one of Robert's friends—some candles. "I was just overwhelmed. Here he was, on the verge of death, making sure I got an anniversary present. And his mom sent flowers on Valentine's Day. Connecting with Robert was the best thing that ever happened to me."

—Mariette Pathy Allen

ROBERT ALLEN EADS

by Maxwell Anderson

Robert Allen Eads was born December 18, 1945, in a tiny no-nothing of a town in West Virginia. The middle child of three, he had an older and a younger brother. Until the day he died, his mother called him Bobby.

Robert himself used many names. When I met him, he called himself Bob. At times he used Ray, and for those hill-billy times, he called himself Ray-Bob. As he matured, Robert became his name of choice.

Robert grew up poor, as did most in West Virginia at that time, but this didn't necessarily mean he was unhappy. He wasn't. There were rough times, of course, but all-in-all, he was loved and cared for. His mother was a stay-at-home mom, and since Robert was a "she" growing up, the bond was strong between them. Although his mother had difficulty with the transition to Robert, she continued to love him, and is with him now, since her death in the early part of 2001.

Robert's father is another story. He loved his children, but was an absentee father. He was a salesman, cars mostly, and tended to work long hours away from home. His good-old-boy nature and country charm made him successful as a salesman and somewhat of a harmless con-artist. Robert had this same trait.

Robert was married three times, twice to men as Barbara, and once to a woman as Bob. His first marriage was cut short by an accident Robert never got over. He had a three-year-old daughter, who along with the father, was involved in a motorcycle accident in which they were both killed. This haunted Robert, and was clearly on his mind in his last few days of life.

His second marriage gave him two sons, whom he loved a great deal. He could not stand their father, and the marriage ended quickly. Robert's relationship with his sons endured, though the oldest son, Doug, left home early and had little to do with his mother throughout the years. Theirs was a cordial relationship at best. His youngest, Bo, adored Robert and vice-versa. The love of Robert's life was his grandson, Keegan, who was fathered by Bo. This was his only grandchild, but unfortunately, Keegan doesn't remember Robert well. He was three when "Pawpaw" passed away.

Robert's third marriage lasted for several years, but wasn't an overly happy one. His wife was a lesbian and never fully accepted the change from lesbians to married straight people. She kept her label and her identity and never let Robert forget that. For obvious reasons, this kept a distance between them, until finally the marriage ended in divorce, and a messy one at that.

Robert spent most of his life in West Virginia. When his youngest son was 14, Robert moved to Daytona Beach with his lesbian lover. They lived next door to his parents, while he left his son behind in West Virginia. Robert was in his forties when he moved away from Mom and Dad, going farther south, to Fort Lauderdale. At church, he met the woman who later became his wife. And he and I met.

Robert and I became best friends as he began his transition—although to hear him talk, he transitioned all his life. I have the pictures to prove he was a newbie when I met him! Robert had no secrets from me!

I watched Robert grow and mature into a wonderful man and a lovely human being. Robert had faults, as do we all, but his heart was always good and caring. His passion was cooking; he had been a chef for many years. In his church, he cooked large meals every Wednesday for the congregation: homemade soups, main course dishes, fabulous desserts, Robert truly had a talent—no, an art—in the kitchen. I had many a meal cooked by those precious hands of his.

In the trans community, Robert stayed mostly in the background. He ventured out a few times to sit on panels a therapist friend of ours held in South Florida for her students. He rarely left Florida. His one stint of activism was helping to man a booth, with myself and three women from IFGE, at the American Medical Association conference, when it was held in Miami. He also hosted parties for our local support group, The Eden Society. The monthly meetings were held at the same church he

attended and cooked for. He would come to the group meetings, but usually later in the evening. As I said, Robert kept a low profile.

Robert's only regular trips were to Atlanta. Every year, we drove up together to attend the Southern Comfort Conference. When I joined the conference's planning committee, he would drive up with me. He never joined the committee, but was always there to offer a smile and support me and the rest of the folks involved.

Robert's contributions to SCC, and to the community itself may have been from the sidelines, but were immeasurable all the same. His charm and wit alone lit up a room. His compassion and loving heart were always given freely. Robert was truly a special man, and he is sorely missed.

Remembering Robert

by Maxwell Anderson

For years, Robert and I shared with each other. I attended his wedding, he helped me through my divorce. He teased me about being a leprechaun—I'm Irish. Go figure! I teased him about his cowboy hat and boots; it added to his country charm. More like blarney!

We were the best of friends; even closer than that, we were brothers. We were family in every sense of the word. We fought—don't all brothers?. We competed with each other, but always in the sense of pushing the other to do more, to be better. It was never a vicious or serious competition between us. We wanted different things out of life. We had different goals for our futures. We drank together, partied together, broke bread together. He was very much a part of my life. His absence now leaves a great hole I will feel until we meet again on the other side.

Robert's illness wasn't a surprise, but his death was. From the day we met, Robert was ill.

He had sustained a disabling back injury many years earlier, in West Virginia. He walked with a cane as the result of that injury, and occasionally spent the day in his wheelchair.

Robert may have had a good heart, but he had a stubborn soul. Doctors' visits were only for renewals of his medication. He didn't have a lot of respect for the profession, and went to the doctor only when he absolutely had to. This stubborn streak cost him in the long run, being diagnosed so late in the stages of cancer. Believe me, for a long time, there were signs something was wrong. He would cough up blood or have blood in his stool, but he would shrug if off. I'd harp at him, and he'd say not to worry. That was his answer a lot: "Not to worry, bro!"

There were but a few firsts in his life. His one and only venture outside of our trips to the Southern Comfort Conference was to Maryland to attend the True Spirit Conference. It was the only other conference he ever attended. In this case, once was enough. That trip was meant to happen, for that's where he met Kate Davis, the filmmaker. She was filming an A&E Investigative Reports episode titled "The Transgender Revolution." Robert appeared in it.

I told you Robert was a charmer. He charmed dear old Kate right off her feet. He opened up to her about his life and about his cancer. She said she knew in an instant that she wanted to film more of this man. We talked about her on the flight home, about the film she wanted to make. Outwardly he laughed, but I know he wanted it. This would be his legacy; his words would reach people he never had the chance to reach while he was alive. With this film, Robert would live forever.

Another first happened at the Southern Comfort Conference, and was put in the film. For the first time in his life, Robert gave a speech to his peers. Many of us

were worried he wouldn't have the strength, but he did. He had the entire lunchtime crowd in tears. His words went from his heart to ours, and none of us will ever forget them. I know I won't.

At this same conference, and again in the film, Robert presented his one and only seminar. There's a running theme through the film between myself and Robert about intimacy versus sex. Robert felt I had no sense of intimacy, and throughout our entire relationship, teased me about this. It was never a serious debate, although the film makes it seem like it was. Jealousy, I believe some call it. I had nothing to be jealous of. This was and is my only dislike of the film. Just so you know, his seminar was titled "Trans-to-Trans Intimacy." When I had presented it in the past, I did talk more about sex. What can I say! I like sex! I stayed in bed during his presentation.

The documentary started as a film about an FTM dying of ovarian cancer. He was refused treatment for being an FTM. Subsequently, the cancer spread quickly, and Robert, in his last days, fell into a coma and passed away. During the nine months of shooting, the focus of the film shifted. Kate met his friends. That would be me, Maxwell; my then-girlfriend and now wife, Cori; Cas, another FTM friend; his wife Stephanie; and a new girl in Robert's life, Lola. Kate also met Robert's parents, his grandson, and his oldest son. The film quickly became about family. A chosen family, as Robert puts it. We were very much a family, still are.

I can't say the film was difficult to make, only because Kate filmed it herself. There was no crew other than herself and her co-producer Elizabeth Adams, who also did the sound. Kate used a digital camera that was small and very much out-of-the-way. There were no big bright lights in our faces, no cords for us to trip over. Kate is our friend, and the camera was just an extension of her face. All in all, it was very unobtrusive.

Watching "Southern Comfort" is another story. We are all our own worst enemies, and none of

us liked the way we looked or came off on film. None of us! Of course, after the initial shock, we've come around. All of us agree Kate did a wonderful job. She filmed a family dealing with love, relationships, and, ultimately, loss. The unfortunate fact is that Robert never saw any of it, but I know in my heart he's proud of what he did, what we all did, what this film is accomplishing.

There are things left out of the film—which is to be expected. Robert's youngest son's job kept him traveling so much that the timing never worked out for him to meet up with Kate to be filmed. Robert had a previous love affair that ended just prior to the filming. Tanya was never mentioned, although Robert was still in love with her. His treatment for cancer was also never mentioned or shown, other than his medications.

Robert began to hemorrhage; this is when he was finally diagnosed with ovarian cancer. The doctor he ended up going to was located in Augusta, Georgia, a three-to-four hour drive from where he lived. A large, apparently inoperable tumor was detected on his kidney. Medication didn't make it shrink. He underwent radiation treatments, but they worsened his condition. His bladder and kidneys were damaged. Radiation was stopped.

Robert was adamant about never going through chemotherapy, but in the last stages he was desperate. He loved Lola, he was scared of dying, and he was in so much pain. For a few months, he did subject himself to chemo treatments. I took him once for this treatment. He slept most of the time while hooked up to the bags of fluid they pumped into him. It was an all-day-long trip, eight hours of lying there as bag after bag pumped the poison into his system. It was the after-effects that were so horrible. On the ride home, he would sleep, then wake up just to vomit. We made several stops on the way home. Once home, he could barely walk. He laid on the couch, sleeping, vomiting. He would be incoherent, dizzy, and in immense pain. It usually took most of the week for him to recover. Then, three weeks later, he would do it all over again.

The strain weakened him even more, and the cancer spread more quickly. A few months of this, and he finally came to terms with the fact that there was nothing else he could so. He lived out the remainder of his life with his dignity intact. He endured the pain with drugs but in the end even they couldn't help.

Robert's wish was to die on his farm. This didn't happen. He needed constant care, and was put in a hospice, where he lived the last few weeks of his life.

Robert fell into a coma. His breathing was shallow. I believe he heard me when I spoke to him. I touched his chest, brushed the hair away from his brow, whispered in his ear. It was time for him to go. When I met Robert he had been heavyset, with a stocky build. Lying on his deathbed, he

weighed less than 80 pounds. He was ready. On January 17, 1999, he left.

Some have asked whether if he had found a physician closer, if he had found help sooner, he would still be alive. I don't know. I do know Robert had been ill for a very long time. He ignored it. He took his hormones, had his chest surgery, and felt he was finished. The bottom organs were ignored. They didn't seem to matter, or even exist. This is what killed him.

Robert was refused treatment. This is unconscionable, but it happens all the time. People without insurance are turned away from hospitals. Physicians don't take on new patients, for whatever reasons they deem reasonable. Robert had a lot of strikes against him. He had no income, no insurance, a female disease to go along with a male name and a male identity. There's no doubt that his being a female-to-male contributed to his being denied assistance by many of those so-called professionals he contacted. But in the end, it was Robert himself who did the most damage by ignoring the signs his own body had been showing him for years. There are doctors out there who will treat us. The key is persistence, and honesty.

Robert didn't want his death to be in vain. He wanted people to learn from his mistakes. He wanted the community to wake up to the very real dangers of denial. He wanted a shift in the importance we as a trans community put on surgeries. It's time we started thinking about taking care of those dreaded female parts all FTMs are born with. It's hard to pass with a size D chest, and even if it's embarrassing, it won't kill you. Prolonged testosterone use without a hysterectomy can. No matter how female they may be, those parts are still with us and we have to deal with them. If we don't remove them, we should at least have regular exams and checkups. If Robert was here, I know he would tell you so himself.

Think About It

by Maxwell Anderson

Truth, fact, reality: sometimes we may want to ignore them, forget they exist, but ultimately they do, and we must face them at some point in our lives. The truth can't be ignored without consequences. Facts exist whether we like them or not, and reality—well what's real is real and there's no way around that.

Transmen have female organs. Sorry, guys, but that's a fact we have to live with. Sure, we can have our breasts removed and have hysterectomies, but do we? The reality is that many of us don't have the latter. And it's the latter that can kill us.

For Stephanie and Cas (bottom left and top right, page 38) "Southern Comfort" kept Robert alive. The film has hopefully opened the hearts and minds of thousands of filmgoers. Says Stephanie:

So far, reactions have been positive, except for our families. Cas's family blew up and were so upset that they wouldn't speak to Cas for more than eight months. He had been out for 12 years before the film was made and didn't think the film could affect him negatively in any way. My mother is the only one that didn't take the film well. We don't talk much anymore.

We never expected the film to fare as well as it has. Funny, we thought it was boring and of course thought we looked terrible and hated some portions of the film that were about us. I hated that the world now knows I've been married serveral times.

I know the difficulties: before transition, no doctor will remove the healthy organ; after transition, it's embarrassing for the doctor to have us in their office. During transition, it's embarrassing for us.

Is there a solution? Yes, take a deep breath, get aggressive, and deal with it. There are doctors who will treat us; you just have to find them. Be persistent and don't give up. Ask around, ask others in the community, ask your primary physician—after all, he knows about you, or at least he should. Look in the phone book. Call the offices. Be honest on the telephone. They don't know who you are when you call. Ask them about treating you, ask them if they've ever known any T people. Ask them directly if they have a problem. That's how we found our doctor.

Yes, some will reject you. A few may be honest and say no thanks to your patronage. Others will use the standard, "We're not taking any new patients." Some might even hang up on you. Obviously, you don't want to use them! There's no shame in honesty. Tell them who and what you are. Be direct and honest about your situation. You can judge by the answers you get how comfortable they will be with you. If you don't feel comfortable, go on to the next number. A phone call doesn't cost anything but your time.

There's an added obstacle though—our own perceptions. Call them insecurities, phobias, or just plain stubbornness and denial. No matter what you call them, they prevent us from seeking and obtaining the medical attention we must have.

I know how female it feels to have your feet up in stirrups. I know the awkwardness of having to go through those dreaded gynecological exams. Pap smears, who needs 'em? We do, guys!

If you want advice, depending on how open you are to the experience, look for a gay physician. Male or female, they'll tend to be more open to your situation and will respect your privacy—although all doctors are supposed to.

Our physician—both my wife and I are trans—keeps up with all our health issues. He monitors our general health as well as our hormone therapy and any issues with regard to our transitions. And he keeps trans out of the records for my insurance. How did we find him? We called around and asked specific questions. We told him we were trans, we weren't out, and didn't want my T on my insurance. He said no problem, and there hasn't been a problem. We've been seeing him for almost two years now.

There are doctors out there. You just have to do your homework. You do it when it comes to SRS surgeons; do it for your general health needs, too.

Please, guys, don't put this one off. I don't want to lose any more friends. Losing my best friend Robert was enough for a lifetime.

Think about it.

Maxwell Anderson can be reached at
< *MrMaxDaddy@aol.com* > .

Since the film was made, both Southern Comfort and True Spirit have arranged for FTMs in attendance to spend a day at a medical clinic that understands their issues. Thanks at least in part to Robert, the humiliation and discomfort of the annual checkup becomes a comradely experience.

Transgender in Australia

Part 1 of 2: Melbourne Photographs by Mariette Pathy Allen Text by Katharine Coleman

Dee Mclaughen

Patricia Church and Karren Murry

Mariette was invited to speak at the Fifth International Congress on Sex and Gender, which was held at the University of Western Australia in Perth, October 24-27, 2002—but one doesn't spend twentysome hours flying just to visit the most remote city in Australia. Such an investment of time justified stopovers in Melbourne and Sydney—all of which Mariette would have done solo had her command of Australian been up to par. But it wasn't, and since I spoke the language and had a bad case of wanderlust, she let me go along.

Once word got out that Mariette was coming to Australia, she was asked to also speak in Melbourne and Sydney. These occasions, along with the conference in Perth, provided wonderful opportunities to witness different aspects of the transgender communities in Australia. Our experience in each of these cities was different, so we decided to generate two articles—this one on Melbourne, and another on the conference in Perth and the Gay Games in Sydney.

Dee Mclaughen's Documentary "The Uninvited Dilemma"

We arrived in Australia in late October, at the beginning of the Australian spring. We were met at the Melbourne airport by Patricia Church, Karren Murry, and film director Dee Mclaughen. It was good fortune and great fun to have one or more of the three shepherding us around during our stay.

Dee was originally from South Africa, where she met her wife, an Australian. Dee's directorial debut was a 1977 documentary set in Patagonia. Thereafter, she and her wife collaborated as a team. In 1995, they moved their production company to Los Angeles, and in 1999 they moved to Australia to be nearer to family.

During pre-production of a film, Dee met Patricia Church, who had just begun her transition. After a few coffeehouse discussions, during which Patricia described her last 30 years of trauma, she proposed a documentary about male-to-female transsexuals. She hoped it could save other transsexuals some of the pain she'd gone through. Equally as important, Patricia wrote a check for the production costs.

The idea resonated with Dee, as she saw the one thing lacking in the transgender community was a feeling of self-worth. Rather than the usual fare showing the transgendered as victims, the documentary would be about people who had found respect for themselves. In the stories of people who learned to value themselves and their struggles, she felt, the transgendered could draw strength and self-respect.

Set in Victoria, Canberra, and Queensland, the 52-minute final version is a series of inspiring and sometimes educational interviews with distinguished researchers, authors, ministers, and, of course, male-to-female transsexuals. Mariette and I were privileged to watch a preliminary edit of Dee's original film and can testify that the equal of any documentary you'll see. Dee's production company is attempting to make a deal for U.S. distribution, hopefully with one of the educational channels. There are plans to release a DVD.

Victoria's Progressive Gender Identity Laws

Australia is a country in which just 18 million people inhabit a continent two-thirds the size of the United States. Melbourne, the capital of the state of Victoria, has a population of 3.5 million. The city has a delightful cosmopolitan feel to it. There are a number of universities, and streetcars are everywhere. The city boasts of having 147 ethnic cultures, none of which appeared to us to represent the beer drinking, croc wrestling stereotype of the Australian outback. And if there were any Priscilla Queens of the Desert there, we missed them.

Melbourne is wonderfully tolerant and protective, and Victoria has a progressive law on the books regarding gender identity. Victoria's 1995 Equal Opportunity Act made it unlawful

Terri McDonald & Justine Cuthbertson

Karren Murry

to treat someone unfairly or harass him or her because of actual or assumed gender identity. And what do they mean by gender identity? Well, it means one's self-identification. That's right; it's how you identify yourself. One doesn't need surgery, hormones, a court order, or a psychiatrist's diagnosis to be protected, just a genuine belief that oneself is oneself.

The Act protects against a wide array of unfair treatments. Consequently, it's illegal to discriminate in the areas of living accommodations, club membership (if the club lies on state land or is assisted by the government), sale of land, education (a boy can wear a dress to school), employment, delivery of goods and services, and sporting activities. It's even illegal to out someone if you discover his or her previous gender.

Furthermore, a person is protected against both direct and indirect unlawful discrimination. Direct discrimination means treating a person of a certain gender identity less favorably than a person without such an identity. Indirect discrimination occurs if, appearances aside, there is in fact discrimination against people who identify as a certain gender.

The Act requires the injured party to first take up his or her complaint with the offender. If that fails, the aggrieved person proceeds to the Equal Opportunity Commission for guidance and, if necessary, lodges a complaint. The Commission attempts reconciliation, but if that fails, it may impose a range of remedies including an apology, job reinstatement, policy changes, or compensation.

We understand that New South Wales, the capital of which is Sydney, has a similar law. We also heard that the northern and rather rural state of Queensland had adopted a similar law. Lastly, on the Federal level, the Labor Government has introduced sweeping reform legislation to overturn state laws that discriminate against same-sex couples and transgendered individuals.

Melbourne's Transgender Society, Crossdressers and Transvestites

Two of our three guides in Melbourne were Patricia Church and Karren Murry. At the time, both of these lovely women were pre-op. We were grateful for their willingness to share their experiences. Having come to their decision in middle age, while living in working-class communities, their stories resonated with the struggles of so many Americans. In distinction, however, they were able to benefit from some of the supportive benefits provided by Victorian law.

The transgender community in Melbourne appears to be much like that of any large American city. In spite of the anti-discrimination law in Victoria, there's still a tendency for the transgendered to stay hidden, visiting mostly "safe" shops, restaurants, and bars. While Melbourne society is exceptionally non-violent, one can detect a certain social stigma in those who are different. And as in the U.S., there's a tendency for the transgender community to align itself with the gay and lesbian community in its fight for political rights.

All that said, Melbourne as a whole is probably safer and more hospitable to the transgendered than any American city. One delightful example of this is the radio station JOY at 94.9 FM, (*online at www.joy.org.au*), with its Tuesday evening talk show "Transmission Time." Jay, Lauren, and Sally are the hostesses for this show, which deals with transgender issues. I listened to them interview Mariette about her work and sojourn to Australia.

Melbourne's transgender community shares some prejudices with the United States. Displays of sexuality are frowned upon, as they are felt to undermine the validity of transgendered peoples. Curiously, the term crossdresser is favored for straight and "serious" non-transsexuals. People who exhibit sexual or fantasy elements in their dressing are referred to as transvestites, in a somewhat derogatory manner. The two don't mix socially. The Seahorse Club of Victoria is for the crossdressers and is much like Tri-Ess in the U.S. The Chameleon Society of Victoria is reputed to be for the transvestites. Members of both

TS partners and Karren Murry

Memorial to Australians killed in Mali terrorist bombing

clubs were in attendance at a gathering of about 70 people who came to hear Mariette speak. I couldn't tell the difference between Seahorse members and Chameleon members.

Transsexuals

Two groups serve Melbourne's transsexuals: TransGender Victoria and Transgender Liberation & Care. TGV is reported to be exclusive to post-op transsexuals, while TLC advertises that it is also open to members of the transgender community. In either case, there appears to be an impression that transsexuals are somewhat elitist. Such peer ranking isn't unknown in the U.S., either.

Currently, Dr. Ceber in Melbourne and Dr. Hearsch in Sydney perform most of the surgeries in Australia. Dr. Ceber takes his patients from the Monash Gender Clinic, which is attached to Monash University in Melbourne. His fee is around $4000 U.S. and there is another $4500 in hospital costs but private insurance and the National Health Scheme cover these fees. Dr. Hearsch takes referrals from private psychiatrists and charges more than Dr. Ceber.

The Monash Gender Clinic has an 18-month program for qualification for MTF surgery. We have no details on FTM surgery. The clinic provides a number of services for those accepted into its program, including voice therapy, hormones, and psychiatric consultation. We were told a candidate has to see a clinic psychiatrist for just an hour every four months. There's no requirement to see a psychotherapist, nor does the National Health Scheme pay for therapy. With such limited "face time," one would think that gaming the system would be common, but the clinic doctors are said to claim a 99% accuracy rate.

The clinic uses the HBIGDA Standards of Care as a guideline, but their psychiatrists are said to place emphasis on a candidate's commitment to appearance, manner, voice, and maintaining employment. One transsexual told us any expression of a desire to have sex with a man would be taboo.

Given Victoria's progressive social climate, it seemed inconsistent that neither the clinic nor the National Health Scheme appear to recognize the substantial emotional support transsexuals need during transition. This could reflect a cultural bias, as we got the impression from the transsexual community that people thought it a weakness or admission of mental illness to seek psychological help. That prejudice, if you will, can even be found in the government's provision of a disability pension and a New Start Allowance to transsexuals if a doctor certifies they have a debilitating chronic illness. Hopefully, the Victorian government will someday provide psychological support with the same dignity they provide legal protection.

Mariette and I were exhausted by the end of our seven-day stay in Melbourne. Every day had been filled with memorable experiences. We were also envious of Victoria's laws and social climate. Granted, there's room for progress down under, but at the airport we expressed to Dee, Patricia, and Karren our embarrassment and disappointment that no city or state in the U.S. has progressed to Victoria's level. That having been said, we waved goodbye and boarded the plane for the four-hour flight to Perth and the Fifth International Congress on Sex and Gender.

Part II will appear in Transgender Tapestry *#104.*

Transcending Genders

- Why do transgender people often find themselves competing for the same seat at a table?
- What must you know about someone before you can even consider extending friendship?

Expectations of Gender

— Judy Osborne

At the moment of birth, a glance at a baby's genitals confers lifelong legal and social expectations. These expectations vary greatly among societies.

Under our own social compact, a child is expected to fit into one of two mutually exclusive categories as soon as the glance discovers the presence or absence of a penis. The gender so assigned correctly describes the child's role in reproduction, but the social obligations of gender reach far beyond that essential definition.

In fact, the dichotomy of gender extends into almost every aspect of life. Rules of gender enforce such unessential features and behaviors as what toys we play with, who we choose as friends and how we deal with them, how we walk and talk, who is an acceptable partner and who is not, the clothes we wear, our jobs, our hobbies, even the color of the first blanket that warms our little body.

Most people find the dichotomy of gender tolerable. Some even like the system because it gives them power. Many never question the dichotomy, accepting it as the natural order of things. Others fight against certain aspects of gender to gain more power and status for themselves. Seemingly normal people chafe their spirits trying to fit a variety of urgent desires and needs into their assigned either/or nature of masculine/feminine but dare not reveal that fact to others.

By definition, transgender people have an especially difficult time conforming to the norms. Most of us seem to exist somewhere between the two gender poles in places deplored by conventional society. Until our community came into being about thirty years ago, each of us found our own path to whatever balance we could create, most of us by keeping our dark secret deeply buried, always on the lookout for safe places to express our outlaw gender expressions, seldom even knowing in those days that anyone else had similar longings. We sublimated our needs and our secret by overachieving or dropping out, abusing drugs or alcohol, withdrawing from social life; perhaps going overboard trying to conform to our assigned gender role in an effort to "say it isn't so." Sometimes we gave up the struggle and took refuge in depression and/or thoughts of suicide. We know of these tendencies from our own histories and the sad stories of others who stayed long in the closet, many coming out at last after retirement or the death of a spouse.

What did we do when at last we found each other and formed a community? We bought into the bipolar system and tried to skip happily all the way from one end of the gender spectrum to the other. Crossdressers mostly stayed rooted in their gender of birth but found ways to interact with society in often-exaggerated versions of the opposite gender. Transsexuals traded one rigid full-time gender role for another, so relieved were they to be shucking the burden of a false life that they willingly jumped through whatever hoops the gender change system placed in their way toward gender peace.

And there were hoops aplenty. Gatekeepers controlling access to hormones and surgery had little research to draw on. The rules of transsexualism instead came right out of fifties attitudes, rules rooted in rigid gender roles and the rampant exercise of paternalism.

To be certified as truly transsexual, and therefore eligible for hormone administration and sexual reassignment surgery, candidates had to undergo extensive therapy during which they were expected to demonstrate that they:

- had lived full time for at least one year in the desired gender, sometimes two,
- could pass convincingly in the other gender according to conventional norms,
- would be heterosexual in the opposite gender,
- were employed or employable in an occupation suitable for a person of the desired gender,
- had been convinced of "being in the wrong body" from their earliest memories,
- had exhibited the behavior of a masculine girl or feminine boy throughout life,
- seldom, if ever, had felt erotic arousal from dressing in clothing traditionally associated with the other gender,
- were disgusted by their genitals,
- and wished fervently to have their bodies corrected through surgery. (Anyone who failed to view sexual reassignment surgery as an urgent goal could not be regarded as serious enough to be certified into the opposite gender for legal or social purposes.)

As a whole variety of transgender support groups emerged and transsexual candidates began to compare notes with veterans, the inevitable happened—we learned to lie. Our lies, duly collected, confirmed the standards which had been set for us. Such "research" continued to guide gatekeeper therapy until recent times.

Although some of the criteria do apply to some transsexuals, a great deal of real-world experience casts doubt on the notion that all the criteria apply to many, if any. Instead we find in ourselves a fluidity of gender and sexuality that calls into question the culture's tendency to categorize everyone by gender and then base a whole set of assumptions on the result.

When you watch what we do instead of what we say, you'll discover that each of us is marvelously individual in finding our own niche of comfort within the kaleidoscope of gender and sexuality.

I hope you'll find this information interesting and useful. You're welcome to contact me at *heyjude@eskimo.com*.

continued from page 28

It's doubtful that even Bailey believes the scientific method leans heavily on intuition, admittedly his chief diagnostic tool; there is precious little science in his book. Indeed, it lacks the kind of empirical data or serious studies one would expect, unless you recount Bailey's lukewarm regurgitation and misapplication of earlier studies that are far from accepted on their own. No, the author expects us to buy his presentiments as the unassailable truth. And he's not willing to listen to anything contrary to his own preconceptions.

Bailey's smug self-confidence permeates his entire tone. He casually dismisses other people's experiences, impressions and self-reports in favor of his own beliefs. When gay men do not discuss having a feminine childhood, they are avoiding the topic because of "femiphobia," a Bailey-coined word. Not even gender therapists escape his condescension: "many 'experts' who make their livings working with them do not understand transsexuals very well." Except Blanchard, of course, whose ideas "have not received the widespread attention they deserve, in large part because sex researchers are not as scholarly as they should be and so don't read the current scientific journals." These researchers must be comatose, because Blanchard first published on AG in 1989. Could it be that they just don't take him as seriously as Bailey does? Naaaawww.

And while Bailey does not lend much credence to most gender specialists, he has complete disregard for the honesty and opinions of transsexual women. After quoting Clarke Institute's (oh, *there's* an unbiased source) Maxine Petersen—"Most gender patients lie"—Bailey spends the next five pages characterizing transsexuals as liars: to our providers and to ourselves. It is clear that such a mistrustful, close-minded, "intuitive" sexologist will never discover the truth about transsexual people because he believes he's already found it. He *knows* in his heart that the "standard story" of a transsexual—of feeling like a member of the other sex, of feeling like a freak in her body and detesting her genitalia, of desiring SRS to make her body match her mind—that this is not really the "truth" about transsexuals. No, the real truth is that we just want to get laid, either by as many men as possible or by "robot man."

Bailey's book is so farcical that it would be hilarious if it weren't for the true threat to the social gains we've made, to the progress we've made with healthcare providers. For the last twenty years, especially the last ten, transsexual people have been getting the word out that we're not a gang of perverts, that our transition and surgery is seldom motivated by sex. Our little bandwagon of Trans Pride has been gathering steam, and, all of a sudden, Bailey's sideshow act comes along and starts slashing tires.

What is puzzling is: why have some serious researchers closed their eyes to this and applauded Bailey's book? Though Bailey has appropriated and misapplied the autogynephilia theory, Blanchard and Lawrence still give it two thumbs up. Given how Bailey practically deifies Blanchard, I suppose that is understandable, but why would a respected physician and transsexual woman like Anne Lawrence dignify this? Perhaps she overlooks the potential for harm?

And the potential for harm *is* great. Not only may more established providers and laypeople begin to reexamine us through smut-colored glasses, even more than do now, there are the younger people whose attitudes may be shaped by this "scholarly" obscenity. On page 206, Bailey demonstrates that a part of him knows he is feeding intolerance. In his own classroom, when discussion turned to the coverage of SRS by medical insurance, even Bailey's more liberal students balk at the notion that SRS should be "subsidized." He further states that his students are "especially hesitant to support surgery for nonhomosexual transsexuals, once they learn about autogynephilia." His students say: "But they don't have the wrong body, they are mentally ill."

Imagine the effect that might have on a legislator who is on the fence about support for anti-discrimination legislation, on an employer who interviews a transsexual woman, on a woman next to you in a support group. Worst if all, imagine the effect on a teenage transsexual girl who mostly knows about her condition from watching "Jerry Springer."

Now she has something new to be ashamed of.

Hignutt's Sword Penetrates Deeply, Review by Erin Swenson, Th.M., Ph.D.

Moonsword, by Diana Hignutt. (PublishAmerica, Inc, 2002, paperback, $21.95)

I have always particularly enjoyed the ways that fantasy and science fiction are able to illuminate the truth. Perhaps that is why, as a minister, I am not particularly put off by arguments that much of scripture is the record of ancient "oral tradition"—stories passed from generation to generation over campfires. These stories often tell more about us and the nature of

our lives than cold hard facts could ever express. Diana Hignutt's first novel, *Moonsword*, is just such a fantasy, one that penetrates to the heart of transgender truth.

It's a druidic tale set in Middle Earth. Our hero, Tolian, is prince of the Kingdom of Lorm, and is on his way with his trusted friend and servant, Delorick, for a hunting trip to a distant wood when they are attacked and severely injured by a troll. With Delorick critically wounded in the battle, Tolian ignores his own injuries to set out for help. He believes he is rescued by the druid priestess Brythia, but soon finds that the druids have actually kidnapped him. They have identified Tolian as the Champion, the chosen one to save the world from total destruction by a demon that has entered the world in the form of a human. In spite of himself and his predicament, Tolian falls in love with the beautiful Brythia, who returns his love even though she knows his fate. It seems that the druidic prophecy that described the champion also said that this savior of the world could "not be male, nor born female." So this order of druid priestesses has for many years been practicing a special ritual that will change the champion from a male into a female, thereby fulfilling the requirements of the prophecy. When he learns of this, Tolian, who is deeply in love with Brythia, finds himself in a terribly awkward predicament. Tolian cannot fathom himself becoming a woman. Not only would it destroy his relationship with Brythia, it would also remove him from succession to his father's throne as King of Lorm. On the other hand, if he refuses, the world and his beloved will surely be destroyed by the evil one.

Many of us who struggle through years of pain about our real nature feel like Tolian, the dread of becoming the other gender causing extreme anxiety which inspires all sorts of bargaining in an attempt to avoid it. There are still many "psychotherapists" who make large sums of money, sometimes as much as $300 an hour, with the promise of a cure. It seems we would do anything to avoid the terror of changing gender, some of us even choosing suicide as an acceptable alternative. If we are lucky, and determined, we can finally become able to accept who we really are and find ways to live joyfully and creatively with our reality.

This is the stuff of the wonderful fantasy of the Moonsword crafted for us by Diana Hignutt. The story is full of twists and turns that captivate the reader. Anyone who likes science fiction or fantasy will enjoy *Moonsword*. Those readers who happen to understand transgender experience from the inside out will find here a mythic tale that penetrates the mystery and the truth of being differently gendered.

J. Michael Bailey

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MICHIGAN

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Tele: (612) 869-7930
E-mail: *KLJensen02@aol.com*
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Department of Family Practice &
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Walter Bockting, Coordinator
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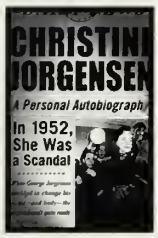

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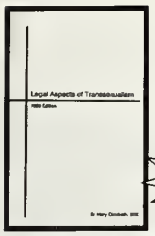

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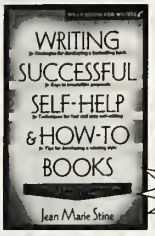

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